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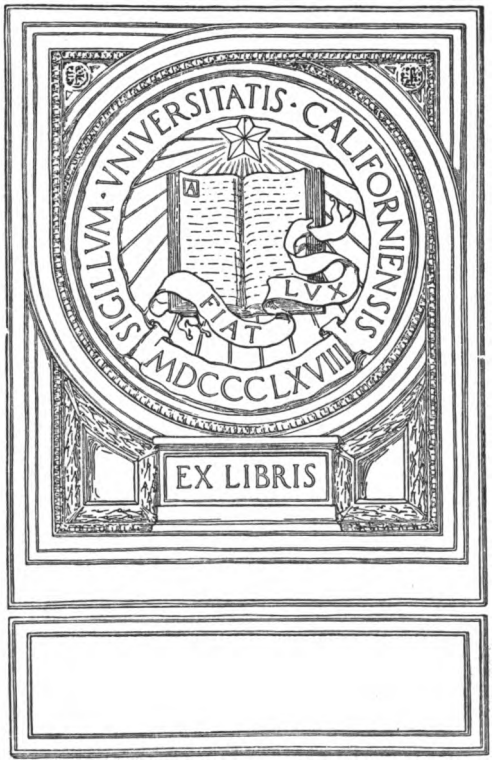

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MERRY HELL!

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RISS 88 CHRISS MAC SAM

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MERRY HELL!

A DANE WITH THE CANADIANS

TRANSLATED
FROM THE DANISH WORK ENTITLED
"NO MAN'S LAND"

By
THOMAS DINESEN, V.C.
1st LIEUTENANT CANADIAN BLACK WATCH
OFFICER OF THE FRENCH CROIX DE GUERRE

JARROLDS *Publishers* (LONDON) LTD.
Paternoster House, Paternoster Row, E.C.4
(*Founded in* 1770)

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Printed in Great Britain at
The Mayflower Press, Plymouth. William Brendon & Son, Ltd.

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TO
MY MOTHER

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INTRODUCTION

We had sailed in my cutter round the coasts of Zealand during the hot summer days and the still luminous nights of July 1914—cruising in and out of the fiords. All night long we had been lying on deck in our shirts and ducks watching the purple glare of the northern sky disappear with the rising sun. On the 24th July we came back to our anchorage at Rungsted.

"No, there is little of any interest in the papers—certainly there's some kind of trouble in the Balkans, for Austria has sent Serbia an ultimatum about something, but they're always bickering down there!"

By the next day we understood that the Balkan trouble had become serious. I remember how we all assembled round the grand piano after dinner—an excited, nervous group, hotly discussing possibilities and dangers, whilst studying the maps spread out before us: Serbia, Austria, Poland, Belgium, the North Sea . . . ?

A week later the whole of Europe was blazing.

With the outbreak of war I joined the "Akademiske Skyttekorps"—the Student's Voluntary Corps—since an enemy might swoop down upon us any day now; and all through the autumn most of our time was given up to training. We constructed wire-entanglements on the "West Front," near the Roskilde highroad; we had much

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target-practice on the Amager Commons, and each morning crawled through the wet, filthy grass on Nørrefælled, meeting the enemy party in a desperate bayonet charge! Just before Christmas we new recruits were promoted to the rank of marksmen. It was all very jolly . . .

But from the very first day of August I knew that, sooner or later, I should have to leave everything and go in search of the real war.

There was—in my set, anyhow—a firm conviction that the future of humanity, the continuance of civilization, the salvation of the world, depended upon the subjugation of Germany. The Prussian militarists had, in accordance with a prearranged and carefully-laid plan, let loose the demons of war over Europe; but now all civilized nations were fighting against them, and soon the day of victory would dawn. The tyranny of Prussia should and would be crushed (how easily we passed over the tyranny of the Czar in those days!). That was the exalted goal. . . . The defeat of Germany would mean the inauguration of a new and better age, and we dreamt about a rejuvenated, free Europe rising out of the ashes of the war under the guidance of the glorious and victorious Allies—with a chastised and repentant Germany in the background—with full security for all the small and weak countries—with the devil of militarism laid by the

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heels for ever—with peace and goodwill between the nations . . .

Now, when it is all over, it is easy to smile superciliously at the naïve dreams and aspirations of those four years. The Versailles Treaty, and the Ruhr Occupation; Lenin and Mussolini; these have since compelled us seriously to revise our general view of the conditions and future of Europe. We were too credulous. It is very difficult to find a short cut to Utopia through the most gigantic of wars and revolutions. Russia of to-day stands as another instance of this fact, though Russia may yet prove to us that the feat can be done. Yet I believe that during the years of war there did exist a true foundation for such Utopian dreams. Up to the conclusion of the peace, with the evasion of President Wilson's fourteen points, there were—so it seems to me—possibilities for a reorganisation and reconstruction of the European community such as may not come our way again for generations.

All the same, a man from a neutral country must have an exceptionally great love for, and faith in, those impersonal ideals to voluntarily sacrifice his life for their realisation. My own hopes were, of course, all for the defeat of Germany—our hereditary enemy; and for the reunion of Denmark and Slesvig. Still it was not hatred of the Prussians; it was not enthusiasm for the cause of

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Liberty in danger; nor indignation at the sight of justice outraged which made it a vital necessity for me to join the fighting armies.

But day by day, whilst snugly ensconced round the breakfast-table at home, we read the news of the flaming war fronts. Out there, on the old battlefields of Europe, in Flanders and Picardy and in countless other places, all the young men of the world were taking part, were doing their bit, in this gigantic contest—the greatest drama of history. To go on living comfortably in the lap of your family; to enjoy quietly and peacefully your studies; sport and pleasures—how was it possible? Everything at home seemed insufferably void, trivial and insignificant: Ypres, Gallipoli, Verdun; those were the names which stood for life and reality!

At the outbreak of hostilities we were, of course, fully convinced that sooner or later Denmark would be dragged into the fray, but the first year of war came to an end, and still we were only lookers-on. People lost interest in this stupid slaughtering and devastation: most of the Danes came to look upon the war as a sort of permanent institution of no special importance for us in the long run, except for the excellent business chances it afforded.

I got my degree as civil engineer at the Polytechnic School in January 1916, and immediately afterwards the military authorities informed me

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that I should have to serve my time in the Danish Navy, commencing in April. Consequently it would not be possible for me to obtain permission for foreign travel. . . . Then, whilst pondering over the possibility of getting off in time without this permit, fate willed it that I should fall and injure my knee whilst out ski-ing. The army surgeon fortunately declared me to be " unfit for military service."

As soon as I could walk again tolerably well I attempted to join the French army or the Foreign Legion, or, in any case, to obtain a *visa* for France. But all admittance appeared to be carefully barred, and at the French Consulate I was treated with the characteristic and nervous irritability of French officialdom. In vain did I explain and prove to them that both my father and my grandfather had won the Cross of the Legion d'Honneur as French officers on the battlefields of France ; but the reply was invariably the same : " Haven't we made it clear to you that we cannot permit you to enter France under any pretext whatsoever ? "

England, then, was my next hope.

During the autumn of 1916 I kept up a regular siege of the British Consulate in Copenhagen, with the object of obtaining an English *visa*. The officials at the Consulate and the Passport Office were— like all English officials—extremely kind and polite, and

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hopelessly confused. A stream of letters went backwards and forwards between the British Offices here and London, with lengthy explanations and applications. At last in January 1917 they sent me the final verdict that all access into Great Britain was definitely refused me. "Sorry, but we can do nothing more to help you!" "And this refusal includes Canada as well?" "It certainly does! But—the frontier between U.S.A. and Canada is more than three thousand miles long. There may be a chance for you to sneak across it somewhere!" Canada, then, was my only chance. I booked a passage on s.s. *Oscar II* for February 12th. Came the 1st of February and the unrestricted U-boat warfare—and all sailing to the U.S.A. stopped. . . .

At last, at the end of March, the Norwegian-American line informed me that they would try to send a boat across, and I lost no time in securing a passage. A few days afterwards the United States entered the war.

On April 22nd, 1917, I left Denmark.

. . . . .

Ten years have passed since the close of hostilities . . .

Already distance has blurred the strong colouring of the war pictures and time has worn off the sharp edges of poignant memories. . . . A whole genera-

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tion has now grown up—a generation which only knows of the world-war from school-books. Ought not we, then, who have seen a little of those days, to endeavour to submit our small personal contribution towards the truthful visualising of the Great War panorama ?

By means of extracts from letters to my people at home, supplemented by my various notes and diaries—as well as from personal recollections—I have here endeavoured to render my impressions, experiences and reflections (limited and self-centred as they were bound to be) of the short time I served as a private in the Canadian army in Canada, England and France.

These reminiscences have but one claim to merit : they are true.

THOMAS DINESEN.

COPENHAGEN, *March* 1929.

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MERRY HELL!

THE FIRST STEP

S.S. "KRISTIANIAFJORD,"
April 27th, 1917.

We are sailing up the west coast of Norway, hugging the coast as closely as possible to avoid getting out into international waters. I suppose we are to go as far up as Bergen before turning west.

Quite a nice boat, this one; with plenty of room and not very many passengers. As we are without cargo of any kind, she is skipping along like an empty egg-shell, but goodness only knows what will happen if we encounter a gale! My cabin mate, the Danish merchant Mr. Lange, and I have chummed with two Russians and an Italian. We five play poker from morning till night. Just now we are having a bit of a rest after having lost a big game to Evolenko who held four kings. The sun is now piercing the clouds and sending us a smile.

Just off Jæderen we got into rather a heavy swell —"Round Jæderen the breakers are roaring," as the Saga has it; but here in Stavangerfiord it is perfectly calm. All around are ranges of low, grey and barren cliffs, but in the far-off distance the mountain-tops are still snow-clad, glittering rose-coloured in the rays of the setting sun. It is a typical Northern night, clear and cold, and outside the skerries are the waters of the big, open North Sea with its mighty blue waves. How glorious to be

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going out to meet real life, to test one's strength for the first time!

Whether I shall succeed in getting into the U.S. army only time can tell; it's a long, immeasurably long way to the front of Flanders and Verdun—and each hour we sail takes us still further away. Even if luck favours me, there's still the tedious first stage—the recruit period—to be got through. But come what may, I am off—I have done my best to further my cause, let fate decide the rest.

HOTEL MCALPIN, NEW YORK,
May 10*th*.

I am just chock-full of new impressions!

The crossing was rather a lengthy one—thirteen days. We had to go up ever so far North, into the fogs and amidst the icebergs; gales we met on the way, and our empty boat rolled and pitched so that the water was flung out of the bathing tubs. We stopped at Halifax for two days, with nothing to do but to watch the little firs and birch trees on the bleak and rocky isles.

At last, yesterday morning, we anchored in the bay of New York, awaiting the customary visit and search. The fog was very thick, and we could see nothing but the little nimble steam-tugs and Customs boats rushing hither and thither. Later on the fog gradually thinned a bit—and suddenly the gigantic sky-scrapers appeared, rising like veritable mountains some five to six hundred feet into the air.

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We were subjected to a most searching cross-examination by the Customs officers, but after all one has to remember that there is a war on over here! They scrutinised my papers and told me that I should stand an excellent chance of getting into the U.S. army. It was past 4 p.m. before we got through, and an hour later we, Mr. Lange and I, reached our present quarters, driving in a taxi no end of a way, across the magnificent Brooklyn bridge and down Fifth Avenue.

From my rooms on the 22nd floor I have a fine view all over the city; the air is clear—through some wonderful contrivance they manage to keep it smoke-free—so that each one of the enormous, magnificent stone-towers far away in the commercial quarters stands out quite sharply. In the abysmal depths beneath my feet I hear the roar of the elevated railway, the "L," as it whizzes around a corner, whilst two stories above my room is the hotel swimming-bath!

All the morning I have been out on my first tour of exploration. Automobiles everywhere—a compact stream gliding over the polished surface of Fifth Avenue or bumping across gravel-heaps and wood-piles in other streets, where they are making room for a new subway. Marble sky-scrapers twenty-five stories high with world-famous shops, all plate-glass and bronze, rub shoulders with ramshackle hovels, advertising the sale of second-hand boots and old iron. The streets were swarming like ant-hills with crowds of southern-looking, undersized men and pretty, elegant

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Jewish girls: life and bustle, sunshine and colour over it all!

General Joffre arrived in New York yesterday, and the streets are profusely decorated in his honour: American, French and English flags waving from every window and on every passing car. To-day Joffre came parading down Fifth Avenue—first a number of police officers on motor-bikes, and then a long train of Army cars, all flying past at the tearing, terrific rate which seems to be the normal pace over here, and flanked by the jubilant masses of a hundred thousand spectators.

Each bus and most of the shop windows exhibit boards exhorting you to join the Army—surely there must be room for me to squeeze in somewhere? All the same, I mean to wait just a few days before I enlist; if they should take me on at once, I shall probably lose any chance of seeing New York properly—that would be too bad.

HOTEL DE VILLE, ATLANTIC CITY,
May 21st.

Last Wednesday, the 16th, it really looked as if luck was at last going to favour me; that the way to the front, debarred for me so persistently, would now be opened.

"Roosevelt is going overseas at the head of 80,000 volunteers!"

I went straight to his headquarters where they were more than willing to take me on—no fear of espionage here! True, there was some small

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formality to be got through first: I should have to take out my "first papers," applying for American citizenship—but they told me that I need never follow up the matter if I didn't want to. As soon as this matter was fixed up, they would enrol me, and in less than two months we would be in France, —80,000 men of the best! They even mentioned the likelihood of sending a limited number of the best suited volunteers to the officers' training school at Saint Cyr. Being a civil engineer and speaking French fairly well, would it be too much to hope that they might give me a chance? I invited Lange to a roaring dinner that night.

But already on Saturday the morning papers appeared with huge headlines: "Wilson refuses Roosevelt permission!" The question is to be tackled in quite a different manner, more sane and deliberate. A big army is to be raised, undergoing a thorough training at home in U.S. before being sent to France.... Where's the hurry, anyway?

Wilson may be right, of course, but sitting alone in my room at the McAlpin I raged and swore all day. What beastly ill-luck again! Then on Sunday I went down here with Helen. What's the good of fretting yourself humpy all over?

One thing seems certain to me: the United States will be obliged to introduce conscription at once if they want to get a decent-sized army together. Eighty thousand adventurers from all corners of the States, with Roosevelt as leader, would have

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been an easy matter; but otherwise there seems a great reluctance on the part of the people here to take part in the European struggle and "fight for Democracy." Mass meetings and street demonstrations are the order of the day, with eulogies of liberty and humanity, with blood-curdling descriptions of German atrocities. French and Belgian officers with medals and stripes get up and speak beautiful words in praise of their new and courageous ally—whilst thousands of young fellows crowd round the platform, completely blocking the traffic. But when the moment comes, after a final, clinching appeal to every brave young man to step forward and fight for his country, the audience of thousands suddenly vanishes into thin air! A couple of youths may be seen awkwardly stepping forward to the speakers on the platform, just to put a question or two, only to saunter away again. The result of the meeting is, as far as I can make it out, one single recruit.

Well, after all, why should the bulk of the American people feel specially elated at the thought of fighting for the cause of the Allies? For three years the American Government has done its utmost to keep the people over here level-headed and neutral; what is now demanded of them is a rather sudden change of front. The papers are certainly doing their best, depicting all Germans as fiends and beasts who ought to be wiped off the face of the earth; but so far they have apparently not succeeded in shaking the national belief in the utter foolishness of it all, nor in lessening

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the supercilious contempt for those poor, dotty Europeans over there. Leave them alone with their squabbles!

It is a fine and jolly place, this Atlantic City. The biggest watering-place on the globe, a thousand hotels, room for two hundred thousand guests! The Americans always like records in every line, world records preferably. Numbers of enormously long piers are built along the beach, stretching far out in the beautiful Atlantic waters; the ocean itself, in fact, is only seen as narrow strips of blue in between huge platforms carrying dancing-floors and restaurants, swing-boats and merry-go-rounds. That's the way they like it.

Vulgar and insipid beyond words they seem to us, these Americans—probably because we do not understand their real soul at all—yet how amazingly clever they are! What skill they possess, these men with thin hair, narrow, pencilled brows, gold-filled teeth and tiny hands and feet! As a civil engineer I am constantly obliged to admire them. When Germany is crushed, who else is there to stand up against them?

HOTEL BILTMORE, NEW YORK,
June 12*th*.

This morning I was enrolled in the Canadian army!

I had come to feel quite at home in the U.S. recruiting offices by now, and the last fortnight had been spent in trotting from one of these places to

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the other all over the city in the vain hope that one of them might prove sufficiently interested in my case to throw all formalities to the winds. But the result was the same everywhere—French, English or American officials all have received me as if I were some specially suspicious, low character, begging of them some unprecedented favour.

Of course they have no lack of material over here now that compulsory service has been introduced. The Government is going to raise an army of two or three million men, but seeing that they have about ten million young fellows to pick from, it stands to reason that now they cannot possibly be interested in the few volunteers. Whenever I entered one of the recruiting offices the authorities examined and cross-examined me regarding my reasons for such an extraordinary desire, conferred with each other with much shrugging of shoulders and slighting glances at my person, and invariably ended by saying that there was nothing doing just now, and that I might apply again in a couple of months, for there were many others, more deserving cases, who had to be given first chance. In one of the places they took the trouble to explain to me at length that, even if I did succeed in getting enrolled, it was by no means certain that I would be sent to France. A soldier must obey orders, and maybe they would order me to Mexico instead! The staff of one of the other offices were sublimely indifferent to my plea to be taken on as a soldier, but were all fire and attention on discovering that I

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carried a square wrist-watch: where did I get it, and how much did it cost, and did everybody in Copenhagen wear such watches?

The other day I confided to Lange all my aspirations and difficulties. Though I am sure he considered me hopelessly dotty he nevertheless promised to do what he could for me. So that same week we called on one of his friends, a Justice of the Supreme Court, who has some connection with the Red Cross Service. He was extremely kind and amiable and said that he felt sure he could get me into the Red Cross in France; but of course this is not what I want.

In spite of all these troubles and disappointments, time has passed very pleasantly in this charming city. Lange has introduced me to a lot of his friends, and I have been most agreeably struck by the inherent kindness and hospitality shown by the Americans towards admiring foreigners. We have been invited on motoring trips along the Hudson River and to dances at the Broadway restaurants every single day! I am sure Lange has been doing it all with the secret intention of seeing this poor fool cured of his belligerent tendencies by falling in love with one of the sweet, pretty American girls we have met—realising, to his own salvation, that love is better than war any day. . . .

There was a notice in some of the papers the other day about a private aviation training-school where they undertook to teach you the art of flying in quite a short time. That might be worth consider-

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ing—would that not improve one's chances at the recruiting offices?

But on my way to the aviation office down-town this morning I happened to pass the local Canadian Headquarters. Since the British Consulate in Copenhagen so emphatically assured me that enlistment in the British Army was entirely out of the question, it had never occurred to me to apply here; however, passing so close by, one might as well inquire what the chances would be for a certificated pilot.

I entered the place fully prepared to meet with the usual curt refusal; but the captain answered my plea with these delightful words: "You are Danish? Of course we want you! Step right in here and let us see if you are fit!" Half an hour later I had been examined and found to be fit (of course I said nothing about my stiff knee). Thus was I registered as a recruit in the Canadian army.

To strike while the iron was hot, I at once attempted to get into the Air Force. Civil engineer and keen sportsman—the captain felt sure that would go fine and sent me into an adjacent office. Once more I was examined and stethoscoped and pinched and punched all over, and the thing was as good as settled—already I saw myself bombarding Berlin!—when all of a sudden they realized that I was not a British subject. That ended my aspirations for the time being—they explained with sincere regrets that they could not accept me as only British subjects were allowed to enter the Air Force. Well, of course there is

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sound reason in that: one single spy amongst the pilots might cause worse disaster than a hundred loyal recruits could repair. Besides, I do not in the least mind starting as an infantry soldier; if the war continues for a couple of years I shall manage to get into the Air Force later on.

The officer in charge advised me to apply for enlistment in a regiment which he called "The Princess Pat's," or, if I cared to wear a kilt, in "The Royal Highlanders." He further gave me hopes of being sent to France next winter, after a training of a few months in Canada and in England.

New York looks quite changed to me to-night—a friendly, peaceful little hole, but rather dull and provincial! At last, at last I have got other things to look forward to than to a dinner in the Biltmore's "Cascades" or a dance with a Broadway show-girl . . .

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RECRUIT IN MONTREAL

GUY STREET BARRACKS, MONTREAL,

July 2nd.

We were fourteen recruits going together, when we left New York for Montreal on Monday the 25th of June, bumping up and down on the hard seats of the train all night: a foretaste of the hardships of soldiering! I got into conversation with two of them immediately—Andrews and Garnham—and we arranged to keep together and enlist in the same regiment. Andrews has come all the way from South America where he left his flourishing business; he hopes to get to the front—*via* Canada and England—in order to do his bit. Most of the other recruits were likewise Englishmen, who for reasons known only to themselves had been dawdling in the States up till now. Some of them looked rather disreputable. . . .

We reached Montreal at 9 a.m., but most of the day was wasted in trying to find out where we had to go. We were driven like a flock of sheep through the streets all day long, from one office to the next, growing gradually more and more tired and irritable. I had brought far too much luggage and my bag was so heavy that it all but tore my arms out. No one could enlighten us. I'd like to know whether all the 400,000 men of the Canadian army have been chivvied about in the same way before they found their ultimate billets!

We were informed that the "Princess Pat's"

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(Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry) were not recruiting just then, so we (Andrews, Garnham and I) decided to enlist in the Royal Highlanders of Canada, "The Black Watch." (My English vocabulary is still very limited . . . I spent the whole first day of my military career in wondering why our regiment should thus be named after a black *watch!*) We had to put on kilts and walk about with our knees bare! Just at present it feels pleasantly cool, but they have promised us trousers for the winter; yet to me it still looks a bit strange to see soldiers wearing skirts!

The New York medical inspection had been most casual and superficial; here, however, we were examined with the minutest care. Measured from point to point at various angles, examined and probed and commented upon, very much as if we were a number of decrepit old hacks—four recruits were rejected as suffering from spavin and crib-bite or some such disease. I was in mortal terror of my stiff knee, but contrived to stick my leg very far behind when making a deep genuflexion, and so escaped discovery. Worse, in my case, was the hearing test. I was utterly incapable of intercepting a single one of the words whispered across the room. However, I strove to make it clear to them that I wasn't really deaf, only one of those "blooming foreigners" who don't understand English. Luckily for me that too seemed to satisfy them.

Next came the question of religion. I said

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that I had no religion, which seemed to surprise them immensely, and I came near to being rejected for that reason. Something must be invented to fill out the "religion column," otherwise there might be difficulties with the interment! So we agreed, finally, that they had better put 'P' (Presbyterian)—on account of my kilt, I guess. Arriving at the swearing-in stage, new difficulties presented themselves, for we had to swear to serve our King faithfully and loyally "so help me God!" and I declared—rather foolishly and bumptious-like I now see—that I could not possibly agree to that. We discussed the matter at some length; then I offered to give "my word of honour" instead. They agreed—quite against all official regulations and rules, I am sure. All the same, it was decent of them.

Of course, we get our whole outfit free of charge: khaki kilt and tunic—with a lot of brass buttons—a small cap and a big, ugly tropical helmet; thick boots, woollen shirt, everything complete down to such items as toothbrushes, razors and polishing rags. We were also given woollen pants, long heavy ones from which we had to cut off a whole yard in order that we could wear them beneath our kilts. However, we soon discovered that wearing pants beneath your kilts is considered a very serious breach of etiquette.

Then, like Kipling's Ethiopian, we "changed our skins." The light grey summer suit, collar and tie and thin shoes were all stowed—together

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NO MAN'S LAND

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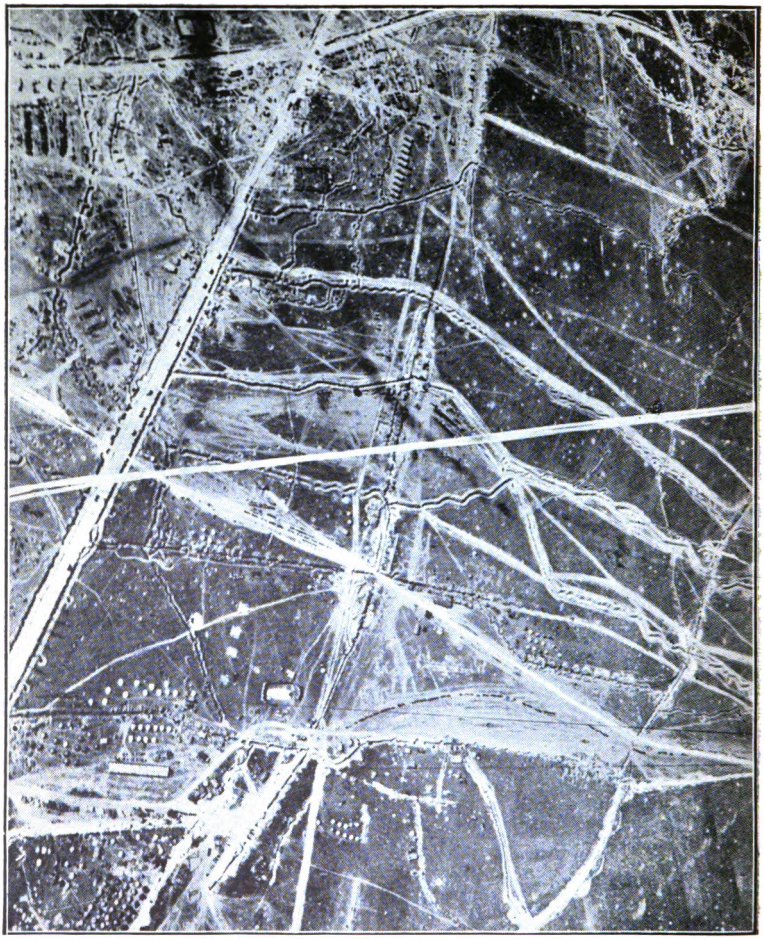

AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH OF THE LINE BEHIND VIMY

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with the responsibilities and independence of civil life—away in the suit-case. Proud and happy, although not without a certain amount of trepidation, I entered upon my new career as Private No. 2075,467; Andrews was No. 2075,466 and Garnham No. 2075,468.

The barracks were a disappointment. One would have thought that a wealthy country like Canada might have provided better quarters for her soldiers. We were billeted in some old disused factory buildings near the railway station; a nasty, musty hole, with dark and narrow corridors, filthy and reeking with coal-dust and all sorts of refuse.

The sleeping quarters are fairly roomy and airy, 70–80 men of our company being installed here. The sleeping accommodation itself is, however, very primitive (the first day I made the mistake of calling them "beds" instead of "bunks," and the whole room roared with laughter at me): a kind of wooden structure built in three tiers. Andrews and I were smart and secured two of the upper ones; it's a bit stuffy up there, but nothing like so dirty and dusty as below. The first night I hardly got a wink of sleep and felt very sore across my hips and shoulders during the following day; but I have already accustomed myself to my bunk—it's simply just a question of sleeping with the soft parts of your body coming between your bones and the boards!

I am constantly surprised to see how easily one gets accustomed to these new conditions of life.

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After the first twenty-four hours of soldiering, it appears to one as the only natural and normal existence of man. We are treated most politely and humanely by officers and N.C.O.'s, and so far we have not begun our course of training, but I do hope we shall start this week. In spite of this, we got our pay—last Friday: $1.10 a day, and as far as I know it is the highest pay received by any soldier in any army in the world.

The whole company marched to church to-day, but first we had a lengthy parade and inspection to make sure that everything was O.K.—shaving and "shining" and the rest. After parade was over, I went up to Lieutenant Molson and asked for permission to "fall out" and remain at barracks as I did not care to go to church. He replied that of course I needn't go if I would rather not, but that he thought I ought to try, just this once! I agreed with him and stepped back into my place.

After church-parade and service we had the rest of the day off, and Andrews, Garnham and I spent the time in drifting up and down the streets. A dull place it seems, at first sight; neither the imposing grandeur and size of New York, nor the culture and historical aspect of European cities. We dropped into three different cinemas during the evening—what else was there to do?—and consumed no end of ice-cream sodas. The authorities have done the right thing in prohibiting the sale of spirits to all soldiers. We had an all-night permit and could stay away till 6 o'clock the next morning, but we didn't enjoy it at all, for we were strangers

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in the place; besides, it poured down steadily all the evening, so for want of other dissipation we took shelter in a Turkish bath in Dorchester Street and spent a comfortable night there, sleeping soundly on couches.

To-day, Dominion Day, we have taken part in a big parade in the park; awfully jolly, with thousands of people looking on and the sun baking us right through. But on our return to barracks we got a thorough dressing-down by our officers for not having yet acquainted ourselves with all the advantages and disadvantages of the kilt; we had all unwittingly roused the rightful indignation and disgust of many law-abiding citizens by not taking sufficient care in gathering our kilts round our knees when throwing ourselves down on the sides of the ditch after parade. Perhaps that's why we have got "C.B." this afternoon? We must not go outside the barrack grounds, but sit at the windows and stare wistfully at the ugly, dusty station square, whilst our pipers are practising for all they are worth close beside us—the same two or three caterwauling sounds over and over again—till it pierces your very marrow.

MONTREAL,
July 22nd.

I have at least found one perfect spot here in Montreal: Mount Royal, the hill west of the city. Here I am lying writing my letters—on the softest greensward, in the shade of a big oak, three hundred feet above the stifling streets. Below, the St.

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Lawrence is glittering in the sun, and my eye follows its windings far away to the N.E. On the opposite bank the luxuriant green fields, broken only by a few small kopjes which resemble stray mole-hills, stretch right away to the horizon. I come up here whenever I have the afternoon off and the weather is fine; and I know the place so well now that I can find my way, even after dark, down the little tortuous paths of the steep hillsides.

We are still waiting for the serious part of the work to begin; after all, it's wartime and surely they will want us to undergo a thorough training to harden us before we are sent to the front? We did real hard work in Denmark in 1914—in the Students' Voluntary Corps; and friends at home have often told me about the recruits of the Danish army doing pack-drill, racing round and round with every stick on their backs till they felt ready to howl with rage and fatigue. But I also heard how, after some months of this, they all got so hardened and trained that the sergeants could not tire them out, try as they might! Here the work is mere child's play. . . .

We are roused at 6 a.m. and get into our clothes in a jiffy; but our four blankets must be neatly folded on our bunks, our rifles carefully cleaned, and buttons and boots shining like the sun—there's plenty to turn your hand to before you are ready to tumble down the stairs to breakfast, which consists of bacon and beans, tea and bread.

Between the barracks and the Grand Trunk Line is a triangular space filled with black dust and

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fenced with palings carrying striking advertisements for chewing-gum and tyres. Here we line up after breakfast, the tallest man on the flank and so on. There are some big fellows amongst us, Andrews is a little taller than I, 6 feet 2 inches, and several of the others are the same height. After a brief inspection we march up behind our drums and pipers, up to the more fashionable parts of the town and through the main streets to the training grounds at the M'Gill University.

We start with an hour's P.T. commanded by a wonderfully smart and beautifully tattooed young sergeant who works like the devil, trying in vain to stir us up.

Next comes squad-drill. One of our three little lieutenants (Molson, McPherson and Fierro) takes charge of this, and they really are wonderfully clever at it considering that they are quite young fellows, fresh from College, I believe; Molson especially has the carriage and demeanour of an experienced general! They teach us the art of falling into line with the minutest precision, forming into two or four ranks, extending in files to the right and closing up again left, and many other tricks which, I take it, must be part of the science of war. We are hopelessly dense and slow at it—there are always some who are either before or after their time, which means that we have to do it all over again right from the very beginning: "*As you were!*" But really, this special part of our training is deadly dull and quite inane, to my mind; I am sick of the whole show every time we

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have to form up again, after our ten minutes' rest on the lawns. The young lieutenant is game all through and most invariably manages to find the right words of command. Now and then it may happen that he gets the sections too intermixed for extricating them in the proper fashion; then he cuts the Gordian knot by darting away to the other end of the grounds: "Fall in here!"

The musketry practice is almost as tedious. I am sure the Ross rifle is an excellent weapon, only far too dainty for warfare—a mere gun for target-practice; but we are supposed to be given quite different ones when we get to England. All they teach us day by day is, therefore, the art of presenting arms and banging our rifles against our shoulders in the correct, jerky fashion—if there's anything to be gained by that!

At 11.30 a.m. we return through the streets to barracks and dinner, and afterwards are free until 2 p.m. Then comes another couple of hours' drilling with supper at 5 p.m.—and nothing doing for the rest of the day! If that ain't taking it easy . . .

The food is plentiful and excellent—always first-class meat or fish and potatoes and, on the top of that, a good old-fashioned English pudding, stodgy but delicious. Supper consists of hash from what was left over from dinner; tea and jam. All this is served in the rough-and-ready style to be expected at barracks; plates and tables showing visible traces of yesterday's meals, and as we file past the cook he bangs a slapdash portion of meat,

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fat or bones on to our proffered plates—why, it all goes the same way, and what do you expect when you get to the front?

Andrews and I spar with the cooks, for we both like toast and they swear at us for messing up their stove with our crumbs.

Every now and then there comes a pleasant break in the monotony of our daily routine work, luckily for us! For instance, yesterday, Olsen and I were sent to Mile End Station to watch for a deserter who was supposed to be taking the train from there. We waited right on till 10 p.m., but he didn't turn up. Of course, we should not have tried to catch him in any case; for if a man does not *wish* to go to the front, it's much the best to get rid of him as soon as possible—at least so it seems to me.

Last Friday we had a sadder job: twelve of us were ordered to parade at a soldier's funeral. The fellow did not fall for his country—it was a comrade's shot ended his life. What mystery lay behind the sad affair no one knew. We marched in front of his coffin all round the mountain, a distance of three or four miles, with rifles lowered, at length firing a salute across his grave. This was the first time I let off my rifle during my soldiering.

The other day we were ordered to bed at 8 p.m., on account of night manœuvres so we were told, and we rejoiced; but when we were called out at midnight, it was simply to march to the railway station to receive some wounded men returning home. Their train, however, did not come in till

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6 a.m., by which hour we were too sleepy to take any interest in the poor wounded heroes.

Now and then, to our intense disgust, we suddenly find our names listed for guard duty. Every bit of our equipment has to be brilliantly polished, which means fully three hours' work before we parade at 9 a.m. Twelve of us, besides the N.C.O.'s, march off with much ceremony to relieve the old guard. We do sentry-go for two hours at a stretch, armed to the teeth, then have four hours' rest in the guard-room. We may sleep on the floor there if we like, but are not permitted to loosen one single button or strap. Last time I was on guard, it was downstairs in the cellars where our prisons are; I could take it at my ease down there, since it was not likely that any of our superior officers would burst in upon me quite unexpectedly, and there was only one prisoner to look after—a recruit who had been committed for theft—to whom I threw a fag at intervals.

After the twenty-four hours' guard duty we are free, with an all-night permit even, for another twenty-four hours, in order to rest after our strenuous duties! That gives one a nice chance of getting outside the town and seeing a bit of the country. Altogether they were not stingy with "passes" in the Canadian army, and one can get a week-end permit (available from Saturday noon till Monday morning) almost as often as one likes.

Last Saturday I took the train to Chateauguay, a small residential town half an hour's journey from Montreal and south of the St. Lawrence. It lies at

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the mouth of a small river, a tributary to the St. Lawrence, and here I put up at the Khaki Country Club, where there were a lot of convalescent soldiers. Next day, Sunday, I witnessed a sad accident—a small boy drowning in the river right before the eyes of his parents and all the week-end visitors. I was out with a canoe, with a stiff-legged soldier. We heard the shrieks and paddled over to the place where the boy's canoe lay, bottom upwards; I tore off my boots and dived several times, but the water was as thick as pea-soup. It was impossible to find him and I only managed to get my wrist-watch spoiled. By and by, some men came along with ropes and boat-hooks, and they eventually got him, but it was too late, and all our attempts at artificial respiration were fruitless.

It has become most awfully hot here now, hotter than it ever is at home in Denmark, yet Montreal is known for her six months' long winter with 40° below zero and the snow lying six feet high! We watch the thermometer with great interest when we turn out and also after dinner; for when it rises above 95° Fahrenheit we are free from drill of any kind! They have to keep us alive till we get to the front, but as a rule it is always one or two degrees short of the mark, and then we must sweat for an hour or two! Last Tuesday, after morning drill, we marched right through the town out to the east harbour. Arriving there, we were ordered on board a ferry and sailed over to St. Helen's Island, a real little Paradise with cool shades set amidst the rushing streams of the

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impressive river. We had both dinner and supper there, and splashed about to our hearts' content in the warm water of a little bay. Afterwards we gorged on ice-cream sodas—this is different from my ideas of soldiering!

The company has now swelled to nearly two hundred, and new drafts are arriving almost every day. I guess that's why we don't get on with our training, but go on repeating the same old exercises over and over again. Once or twice a week it is rumoured that we are going overseas to England, and as regularly as the story crops up we believe in it—just because we are so eager to get off, every man-jack of us. Every time, just as regularly, the story ends in bitter disappointment, and then we get disheartened, and sing:

They say we're goin' over the ocean,
They say we're goin' over the sea,
They say we're going over the ocean,
But it all sounds like . . . to me!

Miss Force in New York possessed a small book of verse by Robert Service: *Rhymes of a Red Cross Man*, and she declared that it was unthinkable that any man could read these verses and still want to go to the war. I read them, and they had just the opposite effect on me; if I had been half-hearted before—*now* I was all fire to get off. Service's poems idealise the war, but I doubt whether life in the trenches is as exciting as *he* depicts it; I fancy most of one's time is spent in fighting the vermin and mud. Well, we shall see for ourselves pretty soon. It is too wonderful

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to think that within the short time of three or four months we shall see it all—all that we have read about during these three last years are as fantastic tales from another world. I shall see "No Man's Land," test the strength of my nerves under a bombardment and, I hope, get a chance of meeting the enemy face to face in a bayonet charge . . .

MONTREAL,
August 11*th.*

We have an excellent opportunity for letter writing, when fate and the sergeant-major have put us on guard duty; for, for sixteen hours out of the twenty-four we kick our heels in the guard-room with nothing to do but sit on a chair. Only the last two or three hours before 9 a.m. parade are used for shining our buttons and boots and making everything look smart. To-night I do sentry-go outside the gates of St. James' Street, twenty to thirty paces to and fro along the side-walk, arms shouldered. Such hours are endlessly long.

And we had been so dead sure of being on the way to England to-day!

Last Wednesday we received the joyful news that a hundred of us—those who had been here longest and were most fed up with the place—were to be sent overseas. During the days following this good news, we had room for no other thoughts but preparations for our journey. We had been given the whole of our overseas kit: blankets, packs,

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one extra pair of boots, etc., and had been inspected times out of number—our kit as well as ourselves. We were also medically examined again—my knee is all right now, I'm glad to say—so now I guess they know whether we are fit or not.

Monday noon, Lieutenant Molson said to us: "Now, boys, you may go out and say good-bye to your friends in town and be back here for the 2 p.m. parade before marching off!" Coming back at 2 o'clock we were informed that our departure had been put off till Tuesday morning. When Tuesday came, they told us that it would be Thursday for certain! On Wednesday, however, we were suddenly despatched by street-cars to the rifle-ranges at Point aux Trembles and all orders about departure seem to have been cancelled—damn it all!

It was rather fun at the ranges the other day, getting a chance of using your rifle for other things than the everlasting old drill! The result, however, was very disappointing as it poured the whole time, and we were unable to see the target through the streams of rain. When not firing we buried ourselves deep in the haystacks or sought shelter wherever else we could find any; but it was of little avail—the water kept trickling steadily down our spines and legs, and yet I have an idea that the whole thing was got up as a kind of a treat for us—to help us get over our disappointment! Of course this kind of target practice is not much good in the way of improving your marksmanship so long as you do not know the ins and

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outs of your rifle and have learned to take aim as well.

Altogether, as time goes on, it begins to dawn on us that we aren't really supposed to learn anything much whilst here in Montreal; we are simply kept here in a sort of pen till they have caught a sufficient number to send a whole cargo overseas! If that weren't so they would have had to train us in quite a different way—why, my form now isn't nearly so good as it used to be after the summer holiday sports at home in Denmark! Our N.C.O.'s have no special training themselves for one thing; they are only promoted to their present exalted rank on account of their prowess and good behaviour, etc., and they'll have to start all over again like the rest of us when we first get to England. Even our officers, who, I fancy, have learnt nothing beyond drilling us in platoons on the parade ground, will have to undergo a long course at an English school for officers before being sent to the front.

We are constantly getting new recruits from the town itself, from West Canada and from the States —young, eager boys who have just reached the age of adolescence, or older fellows, chiefly out-of-work or otherwise "broke," to whom the $1.10 a day represents the last source of salvation. Some of us "older" recruits are always sent down to the station to meet the new drafts and show them the way; many of them look pretty bad when they arrive—filthy, ragged and reeking with the odious Canadian whisky. It is invariably evident that they have had a good spree to celebrate their last

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evening as free men. Marching them home to our barracks, I generally think with disgust: "And so *these* are to be your future comrades and brethren-in-arms!" But when they have been thoroughly cleansed and scrubbed and shaved and have got into kilts, they look quite different, and in a few days they are completely changed—smart and jolly soldiers—most likely some of them will end in being my best chums in the trenches.

The greatest drawback here, as far as I myself am concerned, is the difficulty of the language. Never in all my born days had I dreamt that English would be so hard to learn! As regards the general talk amongst ourselves, it's fairly all right—I can understand and take part in most of it; but when it comes to understanding a lecture by one of the officers I find it very hard to follow, and sometimes make a perfect fool of myself by not being able to grasp a short, snapped-off order. The other day, when my name was up for guard duty, I worked like the devil at my polishing to look quite out-of-the-way smart. Thirteen of us are ordered out for guard regularly, but one of them whom the lieutenant on duty deems to be best "shined" is picked out to be "stickman"; he gets the whole day off and only has to report himself at night at the offices, to serve as messenger, telephone-orderly or the like. He is free to sleep on the office floor all night if he chooses, and to take off his clothes into the bargain. So it is reckoned to be an extra-fine chance. Well, I got my wish that time—and at 5 p.m. I reported at the

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office. Ye gods, what an ass I made of myself! The 'phone rang intermittently, some superior officer, major or colonel or goodness knows who, snapped out a most important order and was gone . . . and I didn't understand one single word of it! In the end someone else had to take my post.

Of course, I do not for a moment wish to change my nationality; away from one's own country one realizes what it means to one—how much love and pride lives in one's heart for the land of our birth—but all the same, being a foreigner in the British Army is, for many and various reasons, a somewhat difficult job.

I do believe I am just as eager as the rest of them to get to France and fight the Germans, but, on the other hand, I cannot feel the native enthusiasm at having to fight the battles of "Old England," nor does my heart feel specially moved at the sound of "God Save the King." Quite the reverse —it is hard not to comment a bit upon the arrogance of the British race when they take it as a matter of course that we should all look upon the Empire as the salt of the earth; and I can't suppress a sarcastic smile when I hear Englishmen condemn the brutality of the Germans, and think of how they themselves have treated Ireland during the past seven hundred years. Being a British soldier such thoughts ought not, of course, to come into my head; I am sure that the only right thing would be to shut my eyes and go ahead without looking right or left—as regards the War and all questions concerning the War. To go to the front in order to

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fight for one's own beloved homeland, feeling sure of the support of all good powers in a rightful struggle with a fiendish enemy on the other side of "No Man's Land"—how grand that must be! Whether I shall be able to meet the trials of the trenches like a man, having enlisted with no such illusions, going to the War for the sake of the War only, is another matter, quite impossible for me to answer, as yet.

Besides, if I had been born English, I should undoubtedly have been training for a commission at this stage; and I admit it, I should like to be an officer. Not for the sake of better food and beds—such things are, after all, not of the slightest importance, one can get used to doing without all kinds of comforts; and when first we do get to the front, it's probably a clear advantage having started as a private. But in the long run, it is a beastly nuisance having to walk about in a big city like a poor recruit! I have always reckoned it to be one of the great experiences of war, that we were all one big, socialistic brotherhood—learning to understand the feelings of all the different strata of society; but here, in this everyday place of a town, a private is decidedly a sort of a pariah, hopelessly outside the pale of good, decent society. He is regarded in a half-contemptuous, half-pitying light and only thought fit to frequent the cheapest restaurants and places of amusement. It's deadly dull wandering about the streets by yourself, and if I go along with the other boys of the company, it means drifting from one 10*c.*

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cinema show to another—with some sort of refreshment in the shape of a water-melon in between. I am really longing to stand them all a treat when we are thus out together, but it is not as easily worked as it may seem; all the decent ones insist on treating me again another time, and it's really more than most of them can afford.

But a walk to the top of Mount Royal is always a pleasure. Afterwards I sometimes treat myself to a grand dinner at Drury's Restaurant: fried mackerel, roast beef and corn-cob.

From over here the War appears in the light of something ever so remote; well, of course, we *are* a good distance away from the fighting front, worse luck! In spite of Montreal having sent many thousand soldiers overseas, life here seems to move along quite unaffected by European upheavals; the only thing to rouse their minds is the possibility of conscription by order of law. Last Sunday we attended Divine service in commemoration of the third anniversary of the War, and the preacher, a Mr. Adams, told the Montreal people straight out what he thought of them. He had spent two years in France, and told us about the wonderful way in which the whole nation, men and women alike, toiled and worked and suffered in unbroken determination; England, too, was waking up. "Here," he said, "the women do fancy-work to adorn their own blouses instead of knitting socks for our soldiers in the trenches. Shame on you all!"

It is getting on towards 8 a.m. I see; that means

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that I must go back to my post as sentry; up and down, up and down . . . .

MONTREAL,
September 18*th.*

The weather just now is gloriously fine. Also in this part of the globe the September sky is unfathomably deep and clear—the white cumuli on the horizon are outlined just as sharply and distinctly as on the first day of a partridge-drive at home.

Otherwise things here are becoming more and more dull and trivial. Since my return from a blessed six days' leave spent in New York, we have been doing the same turn every single day; marching up to the M'Gill training-ground to go through the everlasting sickening parade and squad-drill. We have been hanging about this place for three months now without learning anything, and by the time the big U.S.A. army arrives in France, I guess the War will be over—without any of us having a chance of getting to the front! There is some talk to-night about our going over, but we have been deceived so often . . .

We are gradually getting crammed in our barracks; we are about 850 recruits or more now, all packed together. Dirty pigs they are, most of them, in spite of their many excellent qualities in other directions. Each man spits freely from his bunk in whatever direction suits him best, and all refuse is simply flung out in the middle of the floor.

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The w.c.'s along one of the walls are always running over, so that little pools gradually form under the nearest bunks. The other day I had to see the doctor about an ointment against lice. . . .

Andrews has moved away from my bunk; both he and McLean are now N.C.O.'s (lucky fellows who speak English!), and are consequently too exalted company for the likes of me—*pro tem.*, at any rate! The N.C.O.'s form a small, somewhat arrogant clan of their own and keep to themselves, but I think that this is quite natural since they are without doubt the best soldiers and the nicest fellows of the whole lot: Burke, Dobell, Mentha, Bentley and several others. I only wish I could learn to write decent English and thus be found worthy of belonging to their set.

My bedfellow nowadays is Olsen—his name stamps him as a Scandinavian by extraction, but he himself knows nothing about it, and can speak nothing but English. He has a special talent for ferreting out little pubs. where spirit is cheap and plentiful, with the result that he comes into barracks gloriously drunk almost every night. No one raises any objection; we all like him, and the sergeant on duty laughs at him when watching his antics. But he spends half the night in kicking and shouting and spitting in his sleep—what a blessing that my bunk is not *below* his!

During this last week I have had a lot of boils and little festering wounds on my neck and chin—the result of being shaved in an inferior little shop across the road. I'm too lazy to do it myself!

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They don't hurt, but they look nasty, and for two whole days I was ordered to stay away from morning parade and set the hopeless task of cleaning the barrack-rooms instead. With several days' growth, with my neck and chin adorned with the stain of lotions and scabs, I sneaked round in the darkest corners, like a leper. Now it's nearly over, I am thankful to say.

To-night we have got C.B. and must content ourselves with sitting at the windows enjoying the view! There's a small wooden shed just the other side of St. James' Street where they sell ice-wafers and root-beer, if only Burke will permit a fellow to go and fetch the stuff! These things are our chief consolation at such times.

Several of our lady-friends are waiting for us at the gate as usual, but to-night they wait in vain: we wave our hands sadly to them and tell them to hope for to-morrow. Not that I mind much—these soldier-girls are not particularly seductive, a bit too dirty. . . . I wonder they are allowed to hang about the streets here at the barracks at all; certainly our officers are generally exceedingly solicitous about our virtue and our morals, and our doctor gives us his best advice. ". . . And when you are going to such a house, boys, do take care and choose a clean and decent place here in the western part of the town and pay a dollar or two—what can you expect to get for fifty cents down among the dirty French girls!" And there is a very strict standing-order that every man who has deviated from the path of virtue must present

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himself before the doctor early the next morning in order to be disinfected.

Now that they have passed the Act of Conscription, we perhaps stand a better chance of being sent overseas fairly soon; anyhow, I am sure that it was considered necessary to have plenty of soldiers here in town whilst the struggle for or against conscription lasted. Most of the population in the province of Quebec seems to have been bitterly opposed to this law. Is it right to force such an act of coercion through in this case? Canada has always been praised as a land of liberty; many emigrants have certainly come over from Europe, from Germany and Russia, just to escape the compulsory military service; and really nobody can maintain that Canada has been attacked or that its existence is in jeopardy. Already something like 400,000 Canadians have volunteered for the front; all the best of the young men in the country—a glorious record, surely. Isn't it now a very doubtful gain to scrape the bottom, to create a big apparatus in order to catch a few thousand cowards or idealists and send them to the front as very poor and reluctant victims? The honour of Canada is not enhanced by such measures.

It is, on the whole, only the French-Canadians who refuse to volunteer and who will be hit by this measure, but Montreal is two-thirds French. They certainly don't try to make a secret of their views, that the law about forced conscription is a crime and that they are strongly against all this war

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business altogether. We recruits are extremely unpopular in the French part of the town. It has been necessary to absolutely forbid us to go down into the eastern part, for too often has it happened that a soldier has been assaulted and thrashed down there.

The other night, when the dispute about the Conscription Act was raging most violently, the whole barracks was exhilarated by the report that an infuriated mob was coming through the streets towards us, meaning to wipe us off the earth. Together with a few of the others, I was posted in the office, supplied with plenty of ammunition, with the order to hold the position to the last drop of our blood. The barracks was quickly turned into an impregnable fortress: machine-guns were even placed on the roof, or so we were told, and we waited in tense excitement the whole evening. . . . We heard the roaring and yelling of the mob: "A bas la conscription!" but it didn't get much nearer than the Grand Trunk Station, and so the whole rebellion vanished into thin air!

When first I came here it surprised me that the French-Canadians should be so much opposed to the War. I should have thought that none would be more zealous to rush to the front and fight for France, for most of them are apparently very proud of their French descent. Mr. Nobel, the Danish Consul, says that the explanation is that the French-Canadians are Roman Catholics before everything else, and since France has broken connections with Rome they let the impious land shift

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for itself! Perhaps they may have other reasons besides this; but the Roman Catholic Church certainly has an amazing power here in the French part of Canada, with the inevitable consequences of ignorance, dirt and swarms of children.

But say, here we have Sergeant Burke shouting that the C.B. is lifted!—informing us at the same time that at last he has good tidings about our departure from here. In a fortnight we shall be on the ocean—on our way to the front! And to-night there is still plenty of time for Newton and me to run up to Childs' and enjoy a dozen hot pancakes.

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BRAMSHOTT CAMP, HAMPSHIRE,

October 23rd.

On the 2nd October we waved our happy adieux to Montreal and took the train east. We had one fleeting glimpse of the imposing new monster bridge across the St. Lawrence, and shortly afterwards the lights of Quebec came into sight.

Rumbling along for fully forty-eight hours in a third class compartment, a hundred men together, is not exactly comfortable, and for a civilian it would be a bit of an ordeal. If you are a soldier it is quite a different matter. We played cards all the way, laughed and sang and enjoyed ourselves no end.

All the next day our train wound its way up the hills and down the valleys of New Brunswick, among yellow birches, brown maples and dark-green firs—a real "Indian summer" landscape. But progress was very slow, and at one station, Bathurst, we got out and were taken for an hour's march in order to stretch our legs a bit. At other roadside stations we halted for half-hours or more, nodding and smiling in true heroic style to the young ladies who came to wish us luck. Two of the boys climbed out of the windows, to try their luck with the girls; they had to race for the train so as not to be left behind, but according to their own accounts they had accomplished wonders in the short time at their disposal!

We reached Halifax on the 4th, and were taken straight on board a big passenger boat, the s.s.

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Metagama, and, incredible as it sounds, we of the "Black Watch" were actually billeted in second-class cabins—four in each, with real soft beds! From what the wounded soldiers had told me, I quite expected that we should have been stowed down in the hold, as in a slaver, with our feet in the bilge-water! Now and again one has luck. But, on the other hand, we didn't get half enough to eat; the kitchen was probably not built to supply a couple of battalions, yet a hard-boiled egg with a slice of cold sausage for dinner is trying in the long run. We had to seek compensation in spiritual food—most of the time I stayed in my bunk, reading dozens of cheap novels lent to me by the barber.

Only one day, along the north of Ireland coast, did we encounter a real gale with green breakers towering high over us and crashing down across the fo'c'sle with a glacier of white foam. One thousand sea-sick soldiers—the deck was an awful mess! But all the rest of the time we had fine weather—a real chance for the U-boats, only they didn't turn up. Our boat was, of course, part of a big convoy, a long line of steamers of all sizes, with destroyers ahead and astern for protection. As we had to keep pace with the slowest boat, it was a lengthy business. During the latter part of the crossing we even had to zigzag in order to make it harder for the Germans to get at us.

We were not worried with work or drill of any kind all the time on board, and, apart from the miserable food, we certainly had nothing to com-

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plain about. Every day we had concerts and other kinds of entertainment; and on sunny days, when the wind didn't blow our kilts about too much, we boxed and gambled and had all kinds of fun on deck.

Five months ago I crossed the Atlantic in the opposite direction, a spoiled first-class passenger, pitying the poor second-class passengers below us! Now, we huddled together on the fo'c'sle like wet sheep, keenly envying the stokers their good dinner. But everything has really turned out just as I wished, and not for one moment do I regret my decision. I should enlist again without the slightest hesitation were I back in New York. Now we are at last on the way to our goal and have nothing more to worry about. All the same—I did envy our young lieutenants, strutting on the bridge, boys just out of school; especially the young kids from the Flying Corps, who looked as stuck-up as if they had just caught the Kaiser. But all that will come in due time.

Eventually, without any notable adventures, we watched the cold and naked cliffs of Ireland emerge out of the cold sea, and on the next afternoon, October 17th, we sailed into Liverpool. Everything must take its time, and we waited at the station until after midnight, then we jolted in an enormously long train across England, finally arriving at this camp, 40 miles or so south-west of London.

The next day, Friday, Garney and I had a job as mess orderlies in the officers' mess, washing plates

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from seven in the morning till late at night. Usually we loathe that kind of work, but this time we found it extremely pleasant. We crammed ourselves with steak and jam and pudding all through the day. It is amazing the amount of food one can get inside one after a fortnight on half-rations!

For the time being we were all in quarantine, in a small camp by ourselves on the outskirts of the big training camp, fenced in with barbed-wire and guarded like prisoners of war. But we hope that it will only be a question of days before we are let out of this and are allowed to move about again like human beings. I am longing to have a look round and see a bit of England—from here, our view is limited to a slope, covered with heather, and a corner of a pine forest. Then I hope to come across a shop somewhere to buy a new shirt. It isn't to be expected that our underwear will keep its original colour after having been in use day and night for a month. We haven't had a bath either since we left Montreal, not even the chance for a decent wash, so it is no wonder that the odour in the hut at night is what it is. I lost my cap somewhere on board, and have since had to use an old greasy one, which Serjeant Mentha dug out for me.

All the same, everything is O.K. here in our long, open wooden hut. We are thirty men billeted in here, all of us old pals from Guy Street Barracks. We have a little stove in the middle of the hut, and big bags filled with straw, to sleep

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on. I have managed to get hold of a jar of honey and a tin of biscuits and we lie prating for hours at night in the dim hut, wallowing luxuriously on the soft mattresses and chewing biscuits and filling the hut with smoke—kept awake, too, by the excited poker players around the little table by the smoking stove.

We had expected fairly mild weather over here. Certainly southern England should have a very much warmer climate in winter than Denmark—but we have got icy cold weather which cuts through to the bone, bare-legged as we are. The ground is frozen stone-hard, the sky is clear and pale green as in the high mountains, and at morning parade our fingers when handling our rifles are stiff and numb. They have given us long duck trousers, but they are not to be worn except off duty, and for certain kinds of work. They are pretty cold, but it is good to get pockets again for our homeless hands.

To-morrow is pay-day and the poker players round the store are already staking every penny in anticipation!

For most of the boys here the pay is all their worldly possessions, and they arrived in England absolutely "broke"; yet it is not at all easy for those of us who are a bit better off to help them in any way, except with cigarettes and chocolate and such stuff. Generally, they are too proud to accept gifts of money—although there are exceptions, of course, for some will take whatever they can get. I have already learnt that it is a doubtful

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matter to offer a comrade a loan, for too often the friendship suffers: either he turns up virtuously on the next pay-day to repay the money, and then you feel like a beastly Shylock, squeezing him for his few pennies; or else he disappears on pay-day night, having probably lost his money already playing poker or crown-and-anchor, despising himself, I suppose, for being such a louse. But once let us get to the front, and matters will be quite different. When we have been under fire together the wretched mammon will mean nothing to our brotherhood.

Here at last comes the sergeant with a big mail! There are no less than eight letters and newspapers for me from home.

BRAMSHOTT CAMP,
November 7th.

To-morrow we are off on leave! The six days' landing-leave, to which we have been looking forward most eagerly, has at last arrived and we have been given passes for London or further, wherever we may feel inclined. And we have got our pay—all England lies at our feet, and we sit together around the stove, boasting of all the fooleries we plan to do. I mean to go to my relations in Edinburgh; but first of all I want a couple of days in London—or perhaps three, if I am lucky enough to come across a really sweet girl there. Indeed, it is not good that man should be alone too long. Besides, there are so many sights

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I want to see in London: Westminster Abbey and the Tower, St. Paul's and the British Museum, Piccadilly Circus and the Strand, and the theatres and restaurants as well. I shall be on the move all day. Compared with New York, London will not look very imposing, I reckon, and I can't expect to get half as exceptional a fine time here as they gave me over there.

In Montreal we were always told stories about the devilish hard work and training we should get over here in England, and especially about the dreadfully rigorous discipline we should be up against: if we neglected one single time to salute an officer, they would punish us with "Field Punishment," tying us up to a gunwheel for half a day! But it is possible that they just invented these horrors in order to make us grumble less about the dirt and dullness of the Guy Street Barracks and the perpetual guard duty! In the Quarantine Camp, where we were treated more like prisoners, it was dull enough; but now we have moved to the big training camp and joined the 20th Reserve Battalion. Everything here is nice and cosy, and if we can trust what the old soldiers tell us we shall have an interesting and jolly time.

Anyhow, the discipline is not too severe. Yesterday, at morning parade, the muzzle of my rifle was found to be full of dirt—how it got there, I don't know, I had just cleaned the barrel—but our captain only explained in his kind manner that the rifle is the soldier's best friend and ought always to be treated with respect and care.

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We have been strictly forbidden to bring any bread with us from the mess-room after dinner, and there is a standing-order that we must have no fire in the stove in our hut till after supper-time, yet every day we return to our huts from dinner with our pockets crammed with slices of bread in order to toast them on the hot stove. The sergeant generally comes through the hut on inspection, and is handed a bite . . .

It is a mighty big place, Bramshott Camp, with more than twenty battalions and detachments of various strengths; rows upon rows of huts—a whole town of regular rectangles. Between the huts and the main road from London to Portsmouth is the parade-ground where we march out for P.T. in the morning, and later on for the everlasting idiotic, but apparently inevitable, parade and squad-drill. But on the other side of the road the ground is full of holes, ditches and trenches, and as soon as we get back from leave they are going to teach us trench-warfare and real soldiering. I have been in the Army now for nearly five months, and during all that time we have learnt nothing that can be of any use to us at the front.

East of the camp, along the London road, lies "Tintown," two rows of huts and sheds made of corrugated iron, containing all the little necessaries of the soldier. In between these sheds are built several big huts, where we spend pleasant hours in our spare time, in the evenings and on Sundays. Most of them are "Christian" huts, built by some sect or society—Y.M.C.A., Soldiers' Christian

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Association, Catholic Women's League, Church of England, etc. Here it is warm and snug in the evening, with writing-paper and tables for letters and chess; with tea and cocoa, cakes and buns for a small extra feed before going home; with concerts, lectures and debates—awfully nice places, all of them. We even have a theatre in the camp, a wooden shed as big as a Zeppelin hangar. Newton and I went there yesterday to see *The Story of the Rosary*.

Ever since we moved over here from the Quarantine Camp the 20th Reserve Battalion has been on "Duty-week," instead of the regular training. During that week the battalion has to carry out all the most unpleasant work in the camp, from coaling to guard duty; it's a routine job, fortunately, and all the battalions in the camp will have to take their turns, but it is to be hoped that our training will be finished before our turn comes round again! One day I guarded the cells of the 17th Battalion, whilst on another our work consisted in digging drains from morning till night at different spots in the camp. On Tuesday we loaded coal all day, a filthy job; we finished it an hour before supper time and dragged ourselves into the canteen, dirty, tired and thirsty, and I bought two big tins of peaches—and ever since that day the bare thought of a peach makes all of us sick!

Luckily, our drudgery was shortened by two holidays, after we had been under treatment by the doctor, who vaccinated and inoculated us

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WHERE ONCE LAY AVION

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CHEERY COMRADES

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four times. So now we are completely immune against any kind of disease, no baccilus dare come within sight of us! The treatment in itself is nothing, but it was absolutely necessary to let us off duty for forty-eight hours afterwards, as our arms and shoulders were as stiff and sore as anything. I wish I knew exactly what it is they have squirted into us; after the treatment they write down some hieroglyphics in our pay-book which are absolutely illegible. But the result is certainly marvellous; millions of recruits are sent out, straight from school and office, to the mud and the cold and the vermin at the front, and yet we never hear anything about small-pox or typhus or any other epidemic out there.

But they can't make us immune against venereal diseases, and consequently they must adopt different measures. Three times now have we been listening to long, serious lectures about V.D.—about the many dangerous, deceitful women whom we should find waiting for us in London and elsewhere, ready to ruin us utterly. But now the Empire expected every man to do his duty, keep his path clean and not risk health and future during these hard times. Nevertheless, the doctor knows that every man means to do exactly the reverse, and he is therefore sensible enough to supply us with the proper disinfectants, together with minute directions as to their use. It must be admitted that every precaution has been taken to keep us fit.

Last Friday we went for a route march for the

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first time—that is, we marched dead slow along the road to Hindhead and Greyshott, altogether about six miles, without either rifle or equipment. We are soft and untrained, of course, but however incapable we are, a march of two hours is not the limit to our endurance. After supper, Garney and I walked down to Haslemere, which we had been told we should find down in the valley some three or four miles away. But it is not at all easy to find your way into a strange town here in South England on these winter nights, as every ray of light is forbidden and extinguished. The main street is in pitch darkness, an intricate wilderness. We wandered about in the black night, but at last we found our way, quite accidentally, into a cinema, and from there they directed us to a restaurant, so that we got some kind of an evening out of it, anyhow.

I have always found it difficult to form any real friendships, and here, where I am handicapped by nationality and language, and in part also by class, it is harder than ever. But surely it will all come in time—anyhow, finer men than these thirty boys from my hut it would be hard to find.

Garney is a young journalist from New York, a Roman Catholic, quick and smart, perhaps the best educated among the boys here, but not very popular, as he seizes every opportunity of praising the superiority of the United States over the British stupidity and slackness, until, on the verge of bloodshed, the quarrel is stopped.

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Andrews and Garnham, who enlisted with me in Montreal, are still here in my hut. Garnham is a quiet gentle chap from a small place outside of New York, and one of these days he is going on leave to Liverpool—to be married, poor fellow! Jack Andrews is from Rio de Janeiro, but still a British subject, as are nearly all of my friends here, including Garnham, and, as far as I know, even Garney—and he is one of the few married men whose wives came up to Montreal to say good-bye to them in August when we expected to be sent overseas, and he was overjoyed. Jack is a big, fine-looking fellow, perhaps the best soldier in our hut, but also rather arrogant and conceited—a true English pharisee; but fortunately he has now been reduced from lance-corporal to private. All our corporals from Guy Street Barracks are now in the ranks again.

In Montreal I mostly kept company with Newton, and here also he and I stick together a good deal, going nearly every night to some hut, where there is a concert or a debate. He is only twenty-one years old, but has been a sailor since he was fourteen, has been in almost every port in the world, and has used his eyes well wherever he has been—a trusty friend, always ready to fall in with my suggestions.

Sherwood is an American, enormously tall and thin whom they wouldn't take in the American army. In Montreal he was our drum-major and looked fine leading the company through the streets—here he has been made an ordinary private

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again, and everybody just stares at him when we march through the villages.

Hart, from London, sober and able and cultured; Sam MacDonald, a jolly little round-headed Scotsman, chauffeur from Canada, always happy and cheerful; the inseparable friends Huntley and Palmer (their actual names!), fat Swank, whose language, as far as cursing and swearing goes, is something of a revelation. They are all of them capital fellows, first-rate soldiers in every way!

But now in twenty minutes or so "Lights out" will be sounded, and lots of buttons have to be shined first.

BRAMSHOTT,

December 2nd.

How beautiful it is in England! After church-parade to-day, Garney and I went for a long tramp most of the afternoon, with the sun shining on us and the wind blowing strong, across the loveliest landscape I ever remember having seen. What has America got to compare with this?

Bramshott is situated on the slopes of a big ridge, miles and miles of undulating moors and fir plantations, ending to the N.E. in a high knoll, called Gibbet Hill, 900 feet high, about three miles from camp. On the summit, where formerly the gallows used to stand, beckoning to the robbers on the London high road, a big old-fashioned granite cross has now been put up in its place,

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with an inscription as a sort of post-mortem solace to the smouldering bones of the perpetrators who died here for their sins: POST TENEBRIS LUX—IN LUCE SPES—IN OBITU PAX—POST OBITUM SALUS. (It took me ever so long to interpret.) We sat there on the hill-top, Garney and I, amidst broom and gorse and heather reaching to our knees, looking far away over the deep valley, miles and miles of rich, fertile English autumn pastures with brown oaks and green fields; fifteen miles to the N.E. the silhouette of Leith Hill blocked the horizon.

Beauty of Nature seems to me one of the greatest joys of life, and whenever I get a chance I'm off "roving o'er the hills," and each time I discover new favourite spots to return to! My comrades do not share my taste in this direction, they want to get some fun out of life, so when we go out in flocks we generally turn our steps towards Haslemere. Haslemere is an exceedingly pretty little town, but as to fun, especially on a Sunday evening—well, our excursions generally end in my treating them all to ham-and-eggs at some restaurant. The other night I was down there with no less than three countrymen of mine, all belonging to the camp. They had all been through it: the training-camp—the front—the bombardments—the hospital—and now back into the reserves, to start it all over again! We frightened the poor peaceful citizens out of their wits by roaring Danish songs at the top of our voices when returning to camp! The sedate couples, returning from afternoon

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service, must have thought the Huns had landed in England.

Every single Sunday we go to church, in accordance with the custom here in England. With shining buttons and boots, we stand for hours on the parade ground, waiting to be inspected by the Colonel, and we march afterwards, chilled to the bone, to a Y.M.C.A. hut where they generally give us a fairly sensible and spirited sermon. At twelve o'clock it is over, and we are free for the rest of the day. I might of course stay in the hut if I wanted to, but I am not allowed to leave the camp until after church, so I join in the parade as well as in the singing of the hymns.

Otherwise one day is like the other here in camp. . . .

It is 6 a.m., we are roused by a bugle blast. I turn over on my side and go to sleep again. A few minutes later Lance-Corporal McLean walks into the hut and goes from one to the other: "Now, boys, get a move on now—show a leg!" In passing he drags all my blankets away, so I may as well get up and acknowledge the new day. The little stove in the centre of the hut is red-hot—we have kept it going all night—so it's all right as far as the temperature is concerned; the lighting, though, is rather poor. I grope under my boards and get hold of a small piece of candle, which I light and fasten to the floor beside me in a few drops of its own grease. All round the place, sleepy khaki shirts are beginning to move about on the bunks along the walls. Our bunks here are

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very different from the Montreal ones; they consist of three planks, supported by wooden jacks, raised about six inches from the floor. But they are spoiling us in every way here in England; we have been given mattresses, if you please—big, strong sacks which we ourselves have stuffed with hay. Jack, to the right of me, is the first one ready, as usual; Garney, on my left, is still sound asleep, and no amount of kicking will make him get up in time. Now what the dickens did I do last night with all my gear? I fumble about on the dirty floor in the uncertain light and manage at last to find it all: socks and checked hose-tops, scarlet pseudo-garters, to be held in place by a safety-pin, big, heavy lace-boots and small ankle-puttees. Garney, Jack and I have been smart and secured the bunks nearest the stove for our own selves; it is warm and snug here, but of course there are the cinders and ashes all about—mixed up with the pools of soft mud which we carry back from the parade ground every morning. We sleep in our underclothes—most of us have forgone the Highlander tradition and wear thick pants in this cold winter weather, and the kilt can be slung round one's waist in a jiffy. Meanwhile, an enterprising fellow has run over to the cookhouse to beg a big bucket of boiling water, and there's a whole group of soldiers crowding round it in the middle of the hut. But by the time I reach the washing stage the water in the bucket is tan-coloured from the many heads, so I prefer to take my shaving-kit and sponges outside to the icy tap

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beneath the pent-roof of the washhouse. "Why, don't you ever wash, Tom?" one of the boys inquired the other day.

"Come to the cook-house door, boys,
Come to the cook-house door!"

The bugle call is summoning us once more, and we all scramble over to the long mess-room and crowd together round the tables, twenty-two men at each, to enjoy our excellent porridge and tea. . . .

It is Friday afternoon, and we are out route marching as usual, in typical English weather: misty and calm, with monotonous soft drips from the trees. We are marching along a narrow, muddy lane with ivy-grown walls on each side; gigantic century-old oak trees and elms show here and there through the mist and disappear again along the road and spread over the adjoining fields; the whole country hereabouts resembles one huge park. Now and then we get a glimpse through iron railings of the big, stately, rambling buildings of a country-house, ivy-clad as everything is in this country, with an immense number of chimney-pots. It lies most carefully hidden behind a tall and solid stone wall, and like a flash is revealed to me the almost impassable barrier of class in England, the distance between a private residence, such as the one we just passed, and the hopeless hovels I saw in London's East End.

The unfamiliar burden of the pack on our shoulders is beginning to weigh a bit heavy—not

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that we are by any means overburdened; the solid canvas pack has got to look neat and square, but no one examines the contents. (The other day at parade we were inspected by General Wilson, and after having looked us carefully over, each man at a time, he at last dragged forward an impish little fellow from the hut next to ours, so that the whole battalion might see and admire. His pack was faultlessly strapped, quite square and smooth with sharp corners, and we all felt duly impressed—until after parade, when he showed us that his pack only contained an empty box of the size needed!) Up till now, our route marches have only been about ten miles or so, but perhaps we shall do better to-day; a soldier ought to be able to use his legs—or shall we always be carted round to the various positions in France, I wonder? Two or three hours' marching once a week cannot be called training, surely!

Tramping along at our ease through this narrow country lane, with our rifles slung across our shoulders, we smoke and chat, and sing at intervals in sudden outbursts the old barrack-room ditty from Montreal, the only song, apparently, which the Canadian soldiers are able to learn:

"*Pack up your troubles in your old kit-bag,*
And smile, smile, smile, . . .
While you've a lucifer to light your fag,
Smile, boys, that's the style!
What's the use of worrying?
It never was worth while!
So pack up your troubles in your old kit-bag,
And smile, smile, smile!"

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We swing round the corner and line up on the open space before the old church, where we rest for a short time, lying flat on our backs in the wet grass which tickles our knees. . . .

Our day's work is ended, and Jack and I are sitting in one of the Christian huts—"Soldiers' Christian Association"—writing letters to our people at home. Each one of these huts has its special attraction; the Y.M.'s are the most liberal, and one feels so very comfy there, but the "Catholic Women" have some delicious tarts—we mean to sample them to-night, before turning in. At the Soldiers' Christian Association, where we are now sitting, they give you a fine hot bath for twopence, that's why we are regular customers in this hut twice a week; but they also specialise in missionary work: the walls are decorated with texts and posters in glaring colours—I feel a mean sponger coming to such a holy place!

From the platform at one end of the room a preacher is holding forth about our utter unworthiness, our condition as miserable sinners, describing most vividly what horrors are in store for us. "Coming into one of your huts of an evening," says he in a quavering voice, "where you sit round the stove, smoking, gambling, swearing—makes me feel like entering the mouth of HELL!" And he makes a special point of explaining that dying for one's country and for the cause of justice does in no way bring us nearer to Heaven—that unless we have in due time

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" received Christ " all hopes for salvation must be abandoned. Those of the soldiers who are " saved " sit near the platform and gaze at him with happy, admiring eyes; we others bend lower over our letter-writing, trying to collect our thoughts in spite of the thunderstorm raging above our sinful heads. That is the way they always preach to us here—more or less fanatically, of course. It's the same story over and over, about the merciful God who has given His Son to save our souls—who loves us so much that He desires to torture us, His beloved children, for ever and ever in a hopeless Hell, unless we believe in His charity and strive to resemble Him . . .

Here's Jack coming out of the bathroom—there's room for me to go in and soak now!

BRAMSHOTT,

December 25th.

We have decorated our hut beautifully with holly; the boys are playing " Crown and Anchor," whiling away the hours till dinner, when the turkey is to appear. . . .

We were cheated out of our Christmas leave, after all. We lived in hopes up to the very last moment, and had even gone so far as to stint ourselves of our usual tea and bun treat of an evening, in order to save up money for the feast! On December 7th, the polling day of the Canadian election, rumour would have it that a favourable result—a conscription friendly one—would be rewarded with

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general leave for Christmas, and, of course, we all voted accordingly. A single off-day—Wednesday last—was all we got for our loyal efforts.

By this time we are through with our gas-drill, are experts in meeting attacks of both mustard, pine-apple and tear-gasses.

I guess there'll be plenty of queer things happening to us when first we get to the front, and it is no good instructing us what to do when a mine bursts below us; nor how to protect ourselves when confronting a whole range of machine-guns, in which case one is precisely as helpless as a hare in a *battue*. Gas attacks, they tell us, are quite another matter; you can always protect yourself against their effects so long as you have your mask ready and in working order.

Our outfit and training are absolutely first class as regards gas-drill. The old greasy Ku-Klux-Klan hoods which they gave us when first we arrived have now been changed for tight-fitting rubber masks; ever so much safer and more convenient to wear, yet also much more intricate as to construction. However, we have now mastered all the details, have learnt how to slip them on, tackle the strap behind the head and the clip on the nose—all within six seconds. We have learnt, too, that a man can very well breathe and live on a minimum of oxygen, inhaled through a long tube from a copper-holder, filled with chemicals which he wears on his chest. Last Friday we were up for a sort of final examination and test; after having

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passed satisfactorily, we had to march through a room, filled with the comparatively harmless tear-gas in order to find out whether our masks were sufficiently tight-fitting. They were, absolutely; we felt nothing whatever whilst inside the room, but the gas was so strong that the residue hanging about our clothes made us shed streams of tears when we came outside and took off our masks. Finally, in order to show us how easy it all goes, we were ordered to creep through a long tunnel, filled with the deadly chloride gas. We gave an extra pull-tight to our masks, set our teeth round the mouth-piece and crept tremblingly into the yawning blackness. Not even here did we feel anything unpleasant; we sniffed in vain to catch the smell of the stuff! Maybe, to make doubly sure, they had omitted the gasses and only the tunnel was there!

If only the Germans don't invent some new kind of gas which will percolate right through our masks and chemicals!

Last Sunday I made Garney come along with me to Hindhead so that just for once we might play at being real officers and have a good Christmas dinner at the Hotel Moorland. The whole show turned out a miserable failure; Garney did not like the food —it wasn't up to much, I admit—and thought the wine damnably poor. To make matters worse, he had come away without his tunic and had to appear at table in his greatcoat. At the table next to ours, a corpulent General was sitting scowling at us; the moment we had finished eating we tried

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to sneak away but were intercepted by an A.D.C., and called up to appear before the General. Garney's attempts at impersonal discussion of the suitability of dining in public, dressed in one's greatcoat, were choked at the outset, and he got a thorough dressing down before we were permitted to retire. Garney fumed all the way back to camp, denouncing everything English, and reviling me, who had got him into such a "beastly hole of a place."

To-day is Christmas Day, *the* day of celebrations here in England. We're going to a big blow-out in one of the Y.M.C.A.'s to-night. Yesterday was just like any other ordinary week-day; we had the usual drill and parade and rifle practice all day long.

But for us Danes, Christmas Eve will for ever be the great glory of the whole year, wherever we may be. I don't think it would be possible later in life, whatever Fate has in store for one, to experience such thrills as we all remember from the Christmas Eves of our childhood—outside the closed door, holding our breath in suspense, waiting for the glorious moment when the door shall suddenly open revealing the radiant, miraculous Christmas-tree. . . .

I took a long walk by myself last night—up on the top of Gibbet Hill, and sat there for ever so long, at the foot of the old granite cross, watching Sirius twinkle in the skies to the south, and thinking of my home in Denmark. A man is bound to feel home-sick sometimes. . . .

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MYTCHETT RANGES, NEAR ALDERSHOT,

January 14*th*, 1916.

It really is almost scandalous the way we loaf about here most of the time. Especially now after the battalion has marched back to Bramshott, and we seven snipers have the hut all to ourselves. We have a bit of rifle practice of a morning and a lecture in between; but for the rest of the day we are free to enjoy ourselves. It's too bad! In this way we shall never finish our training and get away to the front; Peace will be upon us before we get a chance!

Otherwise we are extremely snug in this little camp.

It was rather a tough march up here from Bramshott on December 27th; heaps of poor untrained feet got covered in blisters and sores on the way. It was only a very few of us who came out of it game and whole, i.e. those who had been in the habit of tramping the country roads on leave-days and running down to Haslemere every night after supper! It is to be hoped we shall learn to march before we reach Berlin . . . How is it we sing?

"*We are Sam Hughes' army,*
We are his infantry;
We cannot shoot, we cannot fight,
No bloody good are we!
But when we get to Berlin
The Kaiser he will say:
"*Hoch, hoch, mein Gott,*
What a bloody good lot,
Sam Hughes' Infantry."

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The camp here, North Camp, is small and neat—probably built long before the War. Aldershot, immediately to the S.E. of us—has always been a garrison town of note. We have no bunks, but sleep on the bare floor—a bit rough during these bitterly cold, frosty nights. Yet we sleep soundly in spite of everything. Altogether I am constantly amazed at what a man can do without—the way these daily privations and discomforts link on to the jolly, daily routine of a soldier's life as insignificant chains of necessary events. My most sanguine hopes before enlisting were that one might be able to master these nuisances comparatively easily, because the work on the whole was so interesting that the thought of what was coming would help one to get over the trials and tribulations of recruit life . . . and now we find that there *is* no hardship of any kind!

Of course the troubles will begin once we get to the front. The three young Danes I met the other day described life out there in very dismal colours: you are always half-dead from cold and sleeplessness and so hungry that you can eat anything . . .

The rifle-ranges are east of the camp, high up among the heather-covered hills. We have spent three or four hours up there ever since we came to this camp, and are now firing ten to twenty rounds per day per man—with fingers stiff and knees trembling with cold! There has been a record frost the whole time we've been up here, and a little canteen cart has been heaven-sent to the boys. Every morning it comes scuttling merrily uphill,

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at the very moment when you might hear our teeth chatter a long way off; and we rush at it and gulp down bowls of scalding cocoa.

Certainly our military training leaves much to be criticised, but I freely admit that this does not include the rifle-practice—"musketry." They have given us plenty of time to acquire the art to perfection: almost every single day at Bramshott had "musketry" on its programme; lying flat on our stomachs—on a rubber sheet, of course, not to dirty our precious kilts!—we have gone through aim and trigger drill, etc., a hundred times or more. If only the weather had been better, we might have done some fine work. I myself was exceptionally lucky, finishing with 186 marks, and thus attained the dearly coveted marksmanship—minimum 125 marks—as the only one of our company. Needless to say, I felt proud of myself!

We had shooting at all distances, from 100 yards and upwards; ten to fifteen rounds rapid firing and snap-shooting at a cardboard dummy-head bobbing up for a couple of seconds and disappearing again. It was most awfully exciting; one felt hot all over with eagerness, lying there in the frozen grass with one's kilt blown up high on to one's back, and waiting for the marker to signal a "bull's-eye."

Being appointed a marksman is profitable in more ways than one: you "put up" a special badge—two crossed rifles—on your sleeve (which means added polishing work); the captain gives you five shillings when you return to Headquarters (Bramshott, in this case); and, best of all,

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they tell me you are rewarded with six days' extra leave. In return, I felt obliged to do something for my comrades, so invited the thirty inmates of my hut to a feast in Aldershot. Garney and I went on a few hours in advance to make preparations, but it proved well-nigh impossible to get anybody to take an interest in my party; they all persisted that they had sufficient trouble in procuring food for the poor civilians as it was, and that it would be altogether beyond them to provide for an additional thirty heads in these days of ration tickets. It was an awful situation, my guests arriving at any minute; but luckily I found a merciful landlord—manager of "Darracot's Restaurant"—whose sympathy we aroused by explaining that it was our last night before going to the front. He accordingly did his best, and it really was quite good. We visited The Hippodrome after dinner, the whole lot of us; and all the way home to camp we howled in chorus:

"Send out the Army and Navy,
Send out . . .
Send out my brother, my sister, and my mother,
But for God's sake DON'T SEND ME!"

Last Monday the 20th Battalion and the other battalions which were packed together in this camp marched back to Bramshott, so our camp here is practically empty now but for a hundred men or so who have been picked out for an extra course of training, ending eventually in still another course "for snipers only." Only seven men from

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our battalion remain, those who had over 110 marks. Strange to say, they are all my best chums: Jack Garney, MacDonald, Hart, Lee—a Yankee who, among other things, has served in the U.S. army during the war in the Philippines, and is full of tall stories from his belligerent period—and little Morgan, our drummer from Montreal, who is only seventeen years old.

We lucky seven lorded it no end in the almost empty hut. Now we would have a rifle-range all to ourselves—and in a short while we would all have corporal stripes on our sleeves!

But pride always goes before a fall; and that's what happened with us. We couldn't shoot—the gods know why—it seemed as if an evil spell had been cast on us. We stared and aimed till our eyes were ready to jump out of our heads; nevertheless our shots went wide or just grazed the edge of the target. Things grew worse day by day, and when my turn came I disgraced myself thoroughly: my ten snap-shots, for instance, were all misses! We shan't be snipers any of us this time; instead of that, we shall have to return to Bramshott in a few days—the laughing-stock of everybody there!

There isn't a bit of discipline in this camp now, and only on special occasions do we go out into the icy wash-house to get a shave. But it was Sunday yesterday, and before going to church we made a special effort, washed and shaved and looked human for a change.

When at Bramshott we go to the cook-house,

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tripping demurely on our toes like so many little blushing school-girls, under the vigilant gaze of the sergeant-major; here, it has become the fashion to try and force the entrance through the one narrow doorway, a hundred boys at a time. When the time draws near, we crowd together on the steps outside the door as tightly packed as ever possible, and the moment the door is opened from inside we throw ourselves against it with all our might, the two or three fellows at the head of the gang faring worst of all, for they are generally caught and squeezed against the side of the door, where they cling for dear life and howl like wild beasts; the rest of us meanwhile pressing on for all we are worth. Up to now, we have escaped with our lives. Yesterday I was at the head and arrived sprawling headlong with every button torn off my tunic!

We may go to Aldershot every night if we choose, but there's not much fun to be got out of it, and if it weren't for the pleasant intercourse with the opposite sex, I for one would never go. At Bramshott it is a pleasure to be a private, for everything there is arranged for our benefit and done for our sakes. In a big city, on the other hand, an officer is the gentleman and the private soldier only a poor wretched pariah. I learnt as much in Montreal. Even in London—it happened on the first night of my landing-leave that I entered the Trocadero and was taken to a seat at a small table by a flurried, cross-grained waiter. Two other diners were already there, a colonel and a

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captain; they did not exactly order me to go, but they *looked* at me . . .

But inside the hut we were very jolly and happy. Last night Garney and I discussed eugenics and socialism for four hours running. As a Roman Catholic he was, of course, opposed to both, and I couldn't convert him however hard I tried. Then the others came and sat on us when the clock struck the midnight hour.

BRAMSHOTT,

February 16*th*, 1918.

Our battalion has got duty-week once more; but as regards myself, there's no cause for complaint this time since I have got a very light job. I am postman, and rush round the camp from 8 to 12 a.m. and 5 to 9 p.m. with telegrams and express letters. It's rather fun—one gets to know every nook and corner of the whole place; even Headquarters, a big residential building on the highroad, has to yield up all its secrets to me. Sometimes, as for example this evening, there's nothing for me to do and I can write letters by the hour if I like.

They are evidently in no hurry to get us out—probably there's no heavy fighting during the winter. The Germans are supposed to be anxious to postpone their big attack till the roads dry up a bit. We are now as good as through with the training here, so for that matter we might go out at any time. In the meanwhile, they try to invent all sorts of little entertaining jobs for us.

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From the moment of our return from the rifle-range, the days have passed in the usual fashion: P.T. from 7.15 a.m. to 8 a.m.; parade at 8.30 a.m.; drill till noon and again from 1.15 p.m. to 4.30 p.m.;—one can't call that heavy work. During the first eight days after coming back here, we were kept busy with the system of the Lewis guns all day, until their hundreds of little screws, knobs, taps, and springs danced before our eyes during the night. We learnt to dismantle a Lewis gun, every little bit in its place, in twenty-one seconds, and we were able to rattle off the names of them all as pat as you please; but we only practised shooting with them one single time, when we fired a round of cartridges in a gravel-pit; after that we were considered fully trained machine-gunners!

Admitted of course that we raw recruits can have no notion of the demands of life at the front, yet all the same, one cannot swallow all the instructions without discrimination. It seems to me that their methods of teaching are, on the whole, amazingly obsolete and foolish.

I don't mean to say anything more about the endless parades; it may be that they possess a mystical power of shaping raw recruits into full-fledged warriors; and I am a poor hand at mysticism. I know that it is the A B C of all armies all over the world—something of importance must have been attained when a detachment of soldiers, after a training of many months, is able to perform the "Slope Arms!" in the required jerky fashion without a hitch anywhere.

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But there are other things: the hand-grenade drill, i.e. the Mills' bomb-throwing. They are no doubt excellent weapons, these round, rifled iron things, the size of a goose's egg; one feels immensely superior when weighing one of them in one's hand. Now I would have thought it an obvious measure for soldiers in training to be taught how to throw these things as far as possible with a sure aim; also that we should learn by experience exactly how long they are under way when hurled, how they act when bursting and how best to shelter from the explosions. But instead of that, we are taken out day by day and lined up on the parade-ground and taught exceedingly carefully how to stand in a strange, theoretical position; left foot forward; body curved backwards; right arm, pretending to hold the grenade, at backward stretch; right foot at right angles to the given direction; then raise left arm; aim just above the knuckle of forefinger; swing right arm, stretched, in circular move across shoulder; stretch right knee, bend left; etc., etc. These movements are done over and over again; it looks quite fine on the parade-ground, but do they really think we are going to act according to all these instructions when hurling the bombs from a deep and narrow trench —or rushing across No Man's Land? In another couple of days when we have tried to throw these bombs in loaded condition—i.e. when standing behind a huge wall of sandbags, we have tried, just once, to hurl one of them over a wall and have heard it burst with a loud crash—we shall be

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reckoned as fully trained bombers! One might just as well pass a man off as a qualified football player when, after having practised a score of times on an imaginary football by swinging his leg backwards and forwards, he at last tried once to kick the real ball!

It is just the same with the bayonet drill. If they would only put each of us into a padded coat and fix a wooden stick on to the rifle instead of the bayonet, we should be able to fence and fight to our hearts' content and learn all sorts of useful tricks; whereas now we simply thrust into the empty air, stolidly and indifferently—the Germans needn't fear any voluntary bayonet attack on *our* part!

We have put up barbed-wire entanglements on the parade-ground, fixed the iron poles down into the hard ground and pulled them up again, and flayed the skin off our hands and knees so that we have had to run to the doctor every now and then to have them iodined. Once we have even put sticks on to the bombs and practised shooting them out of our guns, just to prove that it can be done. On the other hand, we have up till now had no training in the trenches here, which we were looking forward to from the very beginning. Do they really mean to send us out without teaching us even the slightest preliminaries concerning trench warfare? The whole plan of training, as far as I can see, is exactly the same as in pre-War days. England is conservative in every way and does not give up the old approved-of methods willingly.

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LIÈVIN

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I had a chance of airing these grievances of mine the other day, but my courage failed me when it came to the point. It was Colonel Cantley who sent for me, asked me into his private office and most kindly inquired how I liked it all here? I simply replied by telling him that I felt all right and happy in every way, and had no personal complaint of any kind to bring before him. He mentioned the question of sending me to a school for officers; but really and truly I am fed up with all this everlasting theory, so I want first of all to try practising my knowledge this summer in France, and then maybe take up the question next winter. Besides, I am still hampered by my insufficient knowledge of the English language. Colonel Cantley suggested the possibility of getting lessons from someone in the camp here, and I have now succeeded in finding a place where several of the soldiers go to attend lectures on rhetoric, Shelley's poems, etc., twice a week. It is one of the officers who is giving these lectures, and I attend them most faithfully, trying hard to benefit by what I hear.

Twice they have tried to make use of my ability as civil engineer—with more or less success. Once they got me into one of the offices to try my art as a designer of fashions; I was to make a clear and exact *exposé* of the correct way of placing our regimental badges on our tunics—it was frightfully hard work. A week later I spent two whole days in working out a perspective drawing of a barbed-wire entanglement; all the many different perpendicular, horizontal and slanting wires and posts.

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It was a case of digging out all my old knowledge beneath layers of squad-drill and details of machine-guns! All the same, the ultimate result was quite acceptable, and is now to be seen nailed on to the door of each hut—in blue photolithography.

Immediately upon our return from Aldershot, Captain Patch sent round a list for those to sign who cared to enter for a course in boxing. There were four from our hut who signed: Jack, Sam, little Royston and myself. Royston was quite an able boxer already, but we other three had never had the gloves on so we were glad to get a chance of regular instruction. We had hardly finished our machine-gun training, however, before we received a peremptory call to enter for the big general boxing contest; each battalion was sending ten to fifteen members. We protested most earnestly, pointing to our absolute ignorance of even the merest preliminaries, but Captain Patch spoke such stirring words about the honour of our battalion that at last we gave in! Isn't it foolish of our schools not to teach boys the slightest bit about boxing? With no knowledge whatever of cuts and feints, etc., the whole thing turns into a kind of frenzied scuffle, both parties wasting their strength and breath within the first minutes of the start. Nevertheless, we came off comparatively well and did not put our battalion to shame. Jack got as far as the semi-final in the heavy-weight class, and I won twice in light-heavy.

The tournament took place in the large drill-hall, with all the officers from the whole camp

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present as critics and lookers-on. This put us on our mettle and we all fought desperately—many of those who were knocked out remained unconscious for ever so long and had to have the water-tap turned on them to bring them back to life Both my antagonists were far better boxers than I (i.e. they had at least learned the initial rules of the game); my seconds advised me to hit straight and always aim at my opponent's nose or mouth; and I followed his advice and won! I received some nasty hits on my jaw, causing me to flounder forward, half blinded from the impact, and on the second day I had three of my back teeth splintered —yet in each case I succeeded in landing a smashing blow on my adversary's nose or mouth till the blood streamed all over his face and he had to give up in the third round. After the last match I lay on my bunk all next day, almost deaf and sightless, and when on the following day they called upon me to come into the Ring again, I refused blankly, for I was hardly able to stand on my feet or move my arms. Now that everything is all over I feel ashamed of myself for not coming forward and taking my last beating like a man.

We have now discarded our ugly khaki skirt for real fine, blue-and-green Black Watch kilts—maybe as a sign that we are now real soldiers and no longer raw recruits! That period of my training, the mere thought of which made me shudder when first I came to New York has, since we came to Bramshott, been all play and fun, and happy, jolly days.

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It has been an immensely interesting experience to watch a big army like the Canadian contingent, strong and excellent in every way, being shaped on perfectly democratic lines. There was a world of difference between officers and privates in the old English professional army; whilst the stories of the brutal treatment of the soldiers by officers and non-coms. in the German army are known everywhere. Here, with us, one man is as good as another, our officers are only more advanced comrades, superior to us in training, knowledge and experience. We respect them in accordance with their efficiency and character. There is no tyrannic treatment here!

The other morning I was "up for office" for the first time; the sergeant had reported Sam, Garney and myself and two or three others to the captain —because he simply *couldn't* get us out of our bunks in the morning! But Captain Patch only told us in a fatherly manner how unfair it was to the rest of the boys if we did not do our duty when called upon. "We all want to play the game, don't we?" he asked us. We were deeply contrite and promised never to let it happen again.

The cook-house corporal is the only exception. A week or so ago I was mess orderly and waited at table and did the washing-up in our big mess-room afterwards. We had fish that day, and most of the boys hate it, so the plates were heaped with all sorts of scraps and leavings. I dare say I handled the greasy plates and dish-cloths a bit gingerly; anyway, the corporal jeered at me all

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the time and mocked me quite beyond reason for my fumble-fisted ways. "Jesus Christ! In all my life-born days I've never seen your equal at clumsiness. Mean to call yerself a soldier, you hulking idiot?" I was fuming inwardly, but luckily the corporal was summoned somewhere else just then, otherwise he wouldn't have escaped the cod's head that I was about to hurl at his head.

One big drawback, however, I note regarding the life at Bramshott: there are no girl friends standing outside barracks waiting for us to come out and join them after our day's work is done—as they used to do at Montreal! Houris are absolutely excluded from *this* Paradise. Well, since it is so I guess we shall have to put up with it. . . .

BRAMSHOTT,

March 4th.

There is a rousing speed over everything here this evening, which is something new and quite unknown! Our hut is one busy bee-hive. We have lots of letters to write for we have been ordered to pack and polish and have everything spick and span by to-morrow early. We are off to France! (Only we daren't quite trust it yet because we have been deceived so many times.)

We have had no end of parades and inspections during the last few days. The powers-that-be are still firmly convinced that the only thing which matters for a soldier is for him to be able to "fall in" to perfection, besides shine his brasses till

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they sparkle miles away! Well, I dare say we have learnt other and more useful tricks here; anyway, we are going away in good condition and more than well-provided for in the matter of outfit.

Better than anything else is, to me, our long, warm khaki trousers with pockets. I feel quite rich once more! We even got more than our share—the trousers were about six inches too long and had to be pruned forthwith to make room for our puttees. They've also given us heavy, solid boots—real, imperishable Kitchener boots, which wore the skin off our ankles and toes the first days we wore them.

I had hoped that we seven snipers from Mytchett Ranges would have gone out together, but instead of that we have been scattered as much as possible. Those of us who took part in the boxing tournament have had to stay behind and watch Hart and Morgan go off to France long ago. Newton and Garnham have also been sent out, as well as many other comrades. There is already a rumour that one of them has already "gone west." Jack, MacDonald and I—together with many others of my special chums—are joining the 42nd Battalion; Garney, I am sorry to say, has elected to join the 18th Battalion, which is a pity, but he was always original! However, he won't get off just yet, neither he nor MacDonald nor Lee—they are sitting in clink for their sins!

A soldier's punishment is meted out according to a scale none of us understand. Lee disappeared about a month ago and enjoyed himself in London

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for three whole days (he gave me a most entertaining account of it all), where he was caught and sent back here. The result was that he got five days' Field Punishment. But a few days ago, when he and Garney and MacDonald had been to the dentist and had been maltreated, they went for a little walk round the camp—to get a bit of fresh air. Well, they were seized upon by an M.P. and given ten days. ("Field Punishment" is nothing in the way of mediæval torture; it simply means that you are set to do the scavengers' work of the camp, washing the dishes in the kitchen and doing a lot of extra pack-drill into the bargain.) They declared that the punishment was far too severe and refused to carry the latrine buckets—that's why they are now sitting in clink, until they change their minds.

I met a Danish-Canadian here to-day, Chriss Nielsen, who has just been transferred to the 20th Battalion. He is a smart little fellow—a bar-tender from Winnipeg. He is too late to go over with my draft, but perhaps we'll meet out there.

They had promised us draft-leave, but we were cheated out of it most shamefully. We were to have had six days' pass to London from Friday morning, but when the order came about our departure for the front, the leave was cancelled and we had to give up our passes which had already been issued. Nevertheless I succeeded (after much parley) in getting a week-end pass to Aldershot, where I pretended that I had some dear friends. What I really wanted was a short trip to London before leaving for France. Soldiers are never per-

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mitted to travel by train on Saturdays and Sundays —except on special permits—so the whole thing was a bit risky. But while it was still dark on Saturday morning, White and I got away and reached Haslemere, where the kind M.P. on station duty looked the other way whilst we jumped into the early train to London. Reaching Vauxhall Station, we again felt a bit nervous, but succeeded in escaping into the crowds of the street outside. I got safely back here last night, after thirty-six delightful hours. Good-bye, Piccadilly! . . .

My time at Bramshott Camp has been a thoroughly happy one, and I would never have thought it possible for a man to get so attached to any place outside his own country.

We shall have six months of summer to look forward to when we get to France. The nights will be short and the trenches dry, but we will have our hands full when first we get there, for there are sure signs of the Germans preparing a big attack, a second Verdun, or perhaps something bigger? At the same time, we have been told so much about the strongly fortified English positions, which are supposed to be absolutely impregnable. And by the time we get through with the spring engagements I should think that the Americans will have had sufficient time to get an army together and strong enough to be sent overseas. Surely, then, the Germans will be forced to give up?

I wonder whether any one of us can truthfully say to-night, "I am not afraid?"

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ETAPLES,
March 15*th.*

France, at last!

"*Nous entrerons dans leur carrière*
Quand nos ainés n'y seront plus . . ."

It is strange to see the coast of France emerge through the haze above the smooth water. The tall cliffs and hills seem to sleep peacefully in the sunshine of spring, and yet behind them the future of the world is being wrought and hammered into shape! How strange it is for me to be here at last and to take part in it all; sometimes I almost believe that it is a dream . . .

Of course the departure from Bramshott was delayed; we didn't get off until the 10th!

The crossing from England to France was easy enough—so many troops have been sent over and back these years, that the whole machinery works like a chronometer by now. We were sent *via* London, leaving Waterloo Station at midnight, and so down to the coast at Folkestone, where we stopped for a day. Jack, Sam and I sauntered about the town—a dull place. Next day we crossed the Channel—a very much shorter and easier trip than any of us had expected. We had fine weather all the way, the Channel was a shining mirror so we were all able to keep down our good breakfast.

But when they had landed us at Boulogne and

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we started marching along the endless white high-roads, we very much wished that the winter was back again, for we wore woollen jacket half an inch thick, enormous sweaters, and leather jackets —an outfit much too heavy for a Polar expedition! Besides, we had to carry all our equipment, which weighed something like seventy pounds. The sun was burning down, and there was not a breath of wind —gee whiz! But evidently we are to be spoilt in every possible way, for outside the town a long row of cars were waiting for us, if you please; big lorries with canvas roofings. We were packed into these and set off along the coast.

It is all lime-soil around here, the roads being covered with thick layers of dust after these dry spring days. We were half-choked, squeezed together under the low roof, and coated with dust and sweat. But we hadn't far to go, only about an hour's drive, when we arrived at a big camp set amidst dunes and pine-woods, above the small fishing village of Etaples.

I don't think they intend to give us any further training here; anyhow, we haven't done the least bit of work so far. Twice only have we been out for a bit of a route march, and once we have had to clean up the kitchen—that's all.

To-day I have been lying on my back all the morning in the soft sand, reading an old, ragged copy of *The Three Musketeers*, whilst for the rest of the day—with the exception of a couple of hours' march after dinner—we have played poker in the tent.

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Now and again a German aeroplane is to be seen above us, exceedingly high up—a tiny white point in the blue dome, and scarcely visible against the infinitely clear sky. Of course the anti-aircraft guns open up at once, firing with luminous shells, tracer-bullets—or is it that the shells seem to sparkle in the sun's rays? They look like diminutive sparks, soaring up towards the 'plane, though never exploding anywhere near it. The pilot circles about for a while, taking photos probably, and sails away again towards the east.

The food is good and sufficient, although perhaps not quite so excellent as at Bramshott. We have tea with all our meals, with bacon and jam for breakfast instead of porridge. But we miss our warm, cosy huts with stoves, bunks and mattresses, for we now sleep in tents, big conical unpractical things with "room" for ten men. There is plenty of space for our kit along the edge of the tent, our pack serving as pillows, but our legs and feet get entangled in an extremely troublesome knot around the pole! Yesterday it rained all the morning, and a merry little brook found its way into the tent. It doesn't much matter, all such little annoyances are only met with a joke, as this sandy soil is easy to brush off afterwards. We have a fine time together in the tent, all of us old pals from Bramshott: Jack and Sam, Witley, Wilson, Maclaggan, White and a couple of others, whom I don't know so well.

The day before yesterday, Jack, Sam and I got passes to go down to the town. We had been

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looking forward to a real gay old time, but were sadly disappointed. After all, most of us had certainly come across with certain poetical ideas about the reception we should get—how France would welcome her brave defenders: with flowers and wine, a bit of the Marseillaise, and kisses from all the pretty French girls. But this town is a hole, filthy and rotten, situated alongside of a broad river-bed of black slimy mire, which reeks of fish and dead cats. Every third house is a wine-shop, an *estaminet*, but of other places of interest we could find none. We wandered about the town for hours, but only for lack of anything else to do —the pretty French girls were absent to a marked degree. At last we took to *vin blanc* at an *estaminet*, and didn't expect this light, home-grown wine to be at all stronger than beer, but after we had drained five or six bottles, we found out that it was! By helping each other and taking our time, we at last managed to get back to the camp.

Well, to-morrow morning at sunrise we are to leave this place—probably for some other camp somewhere further inland. The weather is still fine and clear, but at such an early hour we should not be worried by the heat, surely. The nights and the early mornings are cold enough, especially when sleeping in tents with this clear night sky and nipping east wind.

I am sure that we are all of us without exception happy that we are now at last through the long training months (it is nearly eleven months since I left Denmark!), and have now got the real thing

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before us: the trenches, the listening posts, the frantic charge—I wouldn't change places or outlook with anyone in the world!

But—all the same—I sometimes wake up at night and see phantoms . . .

AVION,

March 20th.

And so we are here at last.

Jack and I are sitting on a broken beam-end on the floor, writing letters, with the sun shining freely down on our heads. Our room has neither roof nor ceiling—nothing but four decrepit honeycombed walls. The whole town is apparently one huge ruin, but we have had no chance to explore our surroundings as we are under strict orders to keep quiet and not show as much as a finger-tip above the crumbling walls because a German sniper has his eye on us all the time, eagerly watching for the slightest sign of khaki. In the dark and damp cellar beneath us the tired men back from the listening posts are still sleeping, snoring regularly and peacefully. To-night it will be our turn to go out there with them!

. . . . . .

Fragments of the last days' happenings:

March 17th.

We are marching up the line. . . . It is still early, and we are feeling fit and gay in spite of all the damned stuff we are dragging along with us,

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which dangles against our legs as we walk. These mild, sunny days have made it worse than ever, and we have been obliged to shed our "outer wrappings." It is bad enough with our inch-thick underclothing. . . . Hanging from our persons—fastened to our belts and equipment, or on top of our packs (which are already as heavy as lead), we cart round the following items: A thick greatcoat, an equally substantial sweater, a leather buff-coat—as solid and stiff as a breastplate; a haversack with our polishing and toilet kit; a steel helmet; a bayonet; a spade with a long wooden handle; gas mask; mess tin; blanket and rubber sheet, and last but not least, 120 rounds of ammunition! When you get this load foisted on to your person, as well as your rifle slung across one shoulder and your water-bottle and two spare ration-bags across the other, you almost feel that the ground must give way beneath your weight!

We are still marching through perfectly peaceful districts—flat and woodless landscapes, which show no signs of devastation; only a few English posters and signboards on the houses remind us of the fact that there is "a war on." These parts of the country are densely populated; now we march through small friendly country towns with red roofs and a big grey church in the centre; now through the mining districts, with endless rows of dirty, desolate-looking workmen's cottages. The horizon reveals silhouettes of mountainous cone-shaped heaps of slag from the coal mines.

We started out as fresh and gay as boys on a

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picnic, with howls and yells and laughter; every petticoat we met on our way was greeted with a wonderful mixture of Anglo-French salutation. It is a pity we have no songs worth singing—how different from the "Akademiske Skyttekorps." Again and again we go back to the good old *Pack Up Your Troubles;* or else we roar so that the whole countryside may hear: *The Gang's All Here!* But the best of the lot is the everlasting and ever-varying song of *Mademoiselle from Armentieres:*

Oh, madam, have you any good wine?
parley-vous,
Oh, madam, have you any good wine?
parley-vous,
Oh, madam, have you any good wine,
Fit for a soldier from the line?
Dinkey-dinkey, parley-vous.

It continues: "*Oh, madam, have you a daughter fine?*" "*Yes, I have a daughter fine.*" "*Then . . .* Our imagination pictures the continuation of the song in lusty and vivid colouring, although in any case we have now turned our back on all such pleasures for some time to come.

But by degrees—as we put mile after mile behind us—the straps across our shoulders begin to cut most damnably; we try adjusting our packs, but it makes no difference. The rifle feels as heavy as a ship's mast and has to be shifted continually from one shoulder to the other; we march with drooping heads and bowed backs, sore from the tips of our toes to the hair on our heads. . . .

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Then at last: "Halt, fall out to the left!"

Our rifles are piled in no time, and we fling off the whole of our darned old equipment, sinking down alongside our packs, resting every bone and muscle for a blessed ten minutes. What rotten training we have had that we are so soft! Well, by degrees we revive: there's biscuits, cheese and bully-beef in our haversacks—even some little bits of chocolate left over from our purchases yesterday at the Y.M.

The boys are resting lazily against the sides of the ditch, enjoying a smoke. It's a constant vexation to me that I can't get the same pleasure out of smoking as the rest of them. In this draft there are but few of my chums from Bramshott, only Jack, Sam, White and Sergeant Whitley, who, by the way, will be a private like the rest of us the moment we join the battalion. It is to be hoped that we shall meet many of our friends again as soon as we get to the trenches.

Jack sits beside me, as usual writing letters to his wife; I am studying my map (an excellent automobile map which I bought directly we landed in France), trying to make out where we are going. Yesterday by train through a long river-valley, past Hesdin and St. Pol as far as the small idyllic village of Calonne-Ricouart, with its merry little river flanked by tall poplars; there we were billeted for the night in a big old barn. To-day further on towards S.E. past Bruay and Barlin. Why! then there's only a day's march between us and the historic places, the very spots

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we at home used to mark down most conscientiously on the map with pins and flags, those names which have called to me ever since the autumn of 1914 :

Ces deux ont fait la Marne, Ablain et Carency,
Et le petit a fait Metz et Strassbourg ! . . . Vas-y !

Just over our heads one of the British 'planes is playing tricks and teasing us. Here it comes, whizzing down slantwise in our direction, and just at the very moment when we all throw ourselves flat on the ground it rises once more—almost scalping our heads—and soars upwards at an angle of 45°, the motor literally shrieking. A devilish smart lot, these flying kids ! A little while ago we passed a shrubbery where our Tanks had been practising lately ; stone walls had been levelled beneath them, shrubs and young trees splintered or pressed down into the ground . . . perhaps we shall see them soon, in action.

" Fall in ! " Oh, damn it all !

March 18th.

We are taking it easy to-day. Instead of trudging heavily along the roads, we have been packed into one of the funny little provision trains which skim in and out between huts and tents, keeping up communication between the camps. There's no hurry, evidently. We didn't start from last night's billet in a village near Barlin (Sam and I hired a room from a peasant woman, and slept in a sumptuous bed) until 9 o'clock this morning, and we are only going about ten miles

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further on. It's 4 p.m. now, and we have only covered half of the distance. We are lying on some hay in one of the waggons, and the sun is warming us through. The lovely spring weather is still with us, and the dead slimy grass in the ditches is pierced everywhere by new green sprouts.

I have passed the time reading novels, but I have now handed my book over to Jack, as other matters are attracting my attention. We begin to discover traces of the big upheaval: the neat little pond we have just passed is undoubtedly an old shell-hole; the church over there on the summit of the hill towards S.E. (probably Mont-St.-Eloi) has lost one of its steeples; the rows of poplars along the high road begin to show breaks in their ranks. Look now, how they are firing away at the little German 'plane high up above us! Little smoke-balls are blooming in the air all around it but never hitting anywhere near it; indeed, some of the shots are ridiculously wide of their mark.

Our little train is winding itself through some shrubbery out into the open and we have now an extensive view towards the east—but that long, undulating ridge over there, lying so desolate and empty in the brilliant sunshine, with neither tree nor house to be seen, grizzly, dead—that's the Front. We ask a sergeant on the waggon next to us the name of the hills.

"VIMY RIDGE!"

Already for a long time we have heard the rumbling of guns far away—or rather, we have

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felt a faint vibration in the air when a heavy gun has been fired. Now each single shot is clearly heard . . . "the old battle-song of my forefathers, the song of welcome to us!" It is there we are going!

Our train stops at a junction and remains stationary for ever so long. I get out my map and diaries and make notes whilst we wait. We are hungry, longing for our supper; this morning's ration of bully-beef and hard-tack has been devoured long ago, and our "iron rations" have gone the same way. True, we have been instructed again and again to keep these precious things until some future moment when we are at starvation's door and cut off from any possibility of getting other supplies. But all these rules are surely invented in order that we may have the pleasure of breaking them?

March 19th.

We didn't do so badly yesterday after all, and we arrived here in quite decent time for supper. We are now in a little camp under canvas in the transport lines—La Targette, on the high road between Arras and Bethune, and packed into a small tent in the usual fashion. The weather has changed. We woke this morning to hear the rain pattering against our canvas roofing; and now we are splashing about in mud and dirt, inside as well as outside the tent. However, old Colonel Cantley told us when we set out from Bramshott:

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"Always remember, boys, that things are never so bad that they mightn't be far worse!" And that's true as regards this place, for we have a very good Y.M.C.A., where we can write our letters whilst we wait for orders to march on to our next halt—the trenches—where we are to join the 42nd Battalion.

We have met several of our Bramshott chums here, men who have already been "out," and who tell us all sorts of adventures of the firing line. One of my Canadian friends had his arm torn off by a stray piece of shell as soon as he arrived in this very camp.

March 20th (continued):

It rained all the last part of the way up here yesterday, whilst we plodded along as best we could through the bottomless, clayish mud, our rifles thoroughly soaked in oil. We are wearing our steel helmets now; they are rather heavy, but the fit is quite good and they don't chafe anywhere. Our gas-masks are strapped on to our chests, so that we may slip them on at a moment's notice. But now we are in "battle-order": our cumbersome and heavy packs with our spare underwear and a lot of other gear have been left behind at La Targette, and we carry only our small haversack on our back, containing our (renewed) iron rations, our indispensable shaving kit, and a few other trifles.

It is now nearly a year since the Canadians took

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Vimy Ridge; and the whole of the big broad hill is as bare and deserted as if a primeval glacier had passed over it. Yet most likely these chalky hills about here have always been barren of life and vegetation. The place was strewn with rusty heaps of barbed wire, rotten sand-bags and bits of wood and stumps; the trees along the road were nothing but stumps or blackened branchless trunks, and the ground was pitted all over with shell-holes of varying sizes. But the road was in good repair and we had not far to march—a matter of two or three miles due north, when we swung down a long decline into the valley below, where some peaceful, grass-covered gravel-heaps indicated the site of the village of Souchez.

However ravaged and devastated a place may be—only leave it in peace for a year or two and the wounds will heal; the shattered ruins will be covered by grass and shrubbery and the yawning shell-pits will turn into rush-bordered ponds. But now we get on to a little provision train which took us straight to that part of the valley we had recently captured from the enemy; here, the ruins still stood like grinning skeletons—without any merciful veil covering the traces of war. The train wended its way in and out among the shell-pierced walls of the small town of Angres; every single house had been hit by shells or bullets—sometimes only the roof had gone, another house had been cut clean in halves, leaving a free passage to the tattered, musty rooms on the second floor; a third building had been hit by a

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big shell and was nothing but a heap of gravel, stones and woodwork. The descriptions of the front that we have read in the newspapers during the last three years lie here before our very eyes—in the grey dusk of a windy, rainy day. . . .

Thoroughly drenched, we reached Headquarters at a late hour, after another long tramp through the mud. We were received with scant ceremony and dispatched at once to our detachment: 15th Platoon, D Company—or Don Company, as it was generally called to avoid mistakes.

Our first impression of our future home was anything but pleasant. Swearing inwardly, we groped our way through the inky darkness—for hours, it seemed to me!—along a deep ditch, half-filled with mud and water, until finally we emerged into this ruined village and were permitted to shelter for the night in a low icy cellar—Jack, Sam and I sticking together as usual. We installed ourselves in a cavity in one of the walls and slept fine all night.

This morning at daybreak the platoon returned from the listening posts, where they had been on duty all night. The fellows flung themselves down amongst the shattered bricks on the cellar floor, wet and dirty from head to foot. We three crept up to the wet dawn to our breakfast of tea and bacon —and afterwards had a look round to take our bearings.

Twice during the morning the enemy has sent a volley of mischievous shrapnel over the village which made us tumble down head over heels into

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the cellar. Fragments of the shells crash against the walls just above our heads; but we are safe down here, they say. . . .

The wind has turned N.W., and the clouds are spreading gradually, so we ought to have a fine night.

AVION,
March 24th.

We are out in the front line for the first time. Jack and I are alone at a listening post—an advanced post in the foremost trench.

It took us nearly an hour after nightfall to get up here from our cellar, the trench getting lower and narrower—at last it is really nothing but a shallow ditch, and we were told to crawl the last distance on our hands and knees, though they didn't expect us to do it, of course—the mud was too deep.

We are still in Avion, but the town is completely shattered; the trenches have been laid through gardens (with not one single tree left standing) as well as round the corners of houses which just protrude above the ground. Once in our way up here last night we had to squeeze past a bedstead that stuck out from the ground, whilst a little further on we passed through a cellar, which stank horribly.

Here at our listening post the ditch had been widened and made deeper—a hole filled with slushy mud. I am standing on a piece of board stuck like a step into the wall of the trench, and

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gaze across the parapet over the desolate No Man's Land. Immediately in front of me is a big heap of *débris* and masonry—all that is left of a tall house, whilst a little to the left the roof of another house is lying as if it had just slid down, and whenever a star-shell lights up the scenery I can see the rafters protruding like the ribs of some huge animal.

The moon is in its first quarter, shining brightly in the clear, cold sky; but the eastern side of the gravel-heap is quite dark. In another moment a shadow may slide out of the black hole—one of Fritz's patrols! I am staring as hard as I can, with eyes and ears wide open, watching for the least sign of movement out there in the bewildering waste land. One must not, though, keep staring too long at the same object on such a night as this, or the deceitful light of the moon will make things move. . . . A little while ago I found that two wooden posts at which I had been staring hard for a while began to move backwards and forwards; In an awestruck voice I whispered to Jack that he had better call the lieutenant. After what seemed an endless wait, I heard them come, splashing through the mud, and full of eager interest: "Is there anything—really?" "Where did you see them . . . just near those two wooden posts, eh?" "Yes, that was were I saw them—but they have gone away now." Maybe to-morrow's regimental records will tell of a hostile raid discovered and frustrated just in time!

All night long the guns boom intermittently;

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some of them are quite near, others far away, both northwards and southwards . . . boom . . .boom . . . boom . . . boom-boom . . . BOOM! Just behind us we hear the shrapnel whizzing through the air. The small shells, when far away, creak just like a cycle on a gravel path; others hiss immediately above one's head, like the sound of a big Rolls-Royce going at top speed. In between, comes the sound of the English machine-guns, suddenly stopping, then commencing again all through the night: *dah-dah-dah . . . dah-dah-dah . . . dah-dah-dah-dah!* Of course, they ought to be our best friends, but all the same some of the shots come very close, whizzing just above our heads! *SWU-UPP!* there's a "dart," a big shell from a trench mortar, shooting into the air from Fritz's firing trench over there in the dark, some 2-300 yards away. It rises in the same manner as a rocket, in a big sparkling curve, humming as it sweeps along in our direction! I press myself flat against the soft walls of the slope and can feel it hitting me just between my shoulder-blades! But it falls in No Man's Land, right in front of our post, making a crash like ten thousand thunderclaps. A stray piece of the shell sings in the air above us and buries itself in the wall of our trench.

A couple of officers on their round of inspection are coming up to us now, Captain Grafftey and Lieutenant Scott. They stop and chat with us; their merry laughter rings out so loudly in the night that it invites the enemy to send us a new "dart" —a little nearer this time. I am longing to shout

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"Shut up, for Christ's sake!" but their indifferent ease stops the words on my tongue.

Jack is relieving me now; we have two hours' turn alternately. I throw myself down in the mud against the wall of the trench and look up in the star-strewn sky above me. *Gyw! gyw! gyw!* resounds in the air: Duck, wild geese, woodcock —they seem indifferent to the roar of the guns. We ourselves are also getting used to it. Strange how easily one adjusts oneself to such conditions—trench life becomes so simple and matter-of-course. We feel quite at home here already, yet just a bit disappointed at the monotony of the entertainment provided for us.

How cold it is. In spite of our Arctic outfit, the chill of the mud around your feet rises gradually till your teeth begin to chatter; and it's incredibly hard work getting up again when your turn comes round. There's a frost, I see now; the surface of the mud is glittering with a thin layer of ice.

And now the moon is setting. . . . It is pitch-dark—only the red flashes of the explosions light up the shattered ruins. There's nothing much happening here to-night, and Lieutenant Scott gives us permission to do some spadework. Jack slips away to the neighbouring post and borrows a shovel, and we take turns digging in the heavy mud. An hour after, our post is neat and dry and we are perspiring all over from the exertion.

At six a.m. the night-watches are done with. All of a sudden we see a file of grey forms appearing

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in the dim morning light out of the trench on the right. They are the posts already relieved. All through the daytime only a few snipers and machine-guns are left out here in covered positions; that's all that is needed to guard against a surprise attack. Jack and I fall in behind the rest, spent and weary, and we trudge heavily through the windings of the communication trenches—"home" to tea and bacon, and a well-earned rest in our damp cellar.

Another night.

All has been quiet till about midnight. We have enjoyed the fine weather, chatted and worked at our digging and been on a visit to the men at the nearest posts. But we have heard something about a gas attack from our side—this gentle westerly breeze would be very favourable. So we sit still, waiting in intense excitement, expecting to hear a terrific roar. But gas-bombs don't explode, they crack gently with a small "*swap*"; and as soon as the moment comes when thousands of gas cylinders are suddenly flung across No Man's Land, we in the trenches hear nothing but vague sounds like a distant storm, a huge waterspout, rising and disappearing again.

But Fritz gets mad, and not without reason; only instead of turning his rage towards the guilty parties—the gas people—he begins to "strafe" us at the listening posts. Red, blue and white lights, signals for his artillery, rise like fireworks behind his lines. All the enemy guns, from the

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trench mortars to the heavy artillery far behind, answer the call and join the chorus of battle. We are in for it now!

The bombardment increases in strength every minute, showers of darts and shrapnel come shrieking down upon us; the heaped-up remains of shattered buildings just in front are now flaming and spluttering whilst fragments of bricks and splintered wood fall upon us. This must surely be the preparation before the attack! Jack and I stand at our post, side by side, quivering all over, our eyes just above the parapet—staring into the flaming hell ahead.

But the sergeant comes creeping towards us along the bottom of the ditch: "Get to hell down from there, you goddam idiots! Don't you understand that there'll be no attack as long as this firing goes on?" We jump down and join some of the others in the darkest and narrowest part of the trench which at one spot fortunately goes through a big heap of masonry into quite a narrow cleft.

Hizzz—*Crash!!* the shells are bursting both in front and behind our hiding-place; the very ground is trembling and we too tremble. Our hair is standing on end—but—are we scared? are we downhearted? No!! We hurl all sorts of execrations towards the shells flying above us, though our voices are lost in the din of the explosions. "Get away, you damned son-of-a-gun! Good boy, he passed us! There's another bastard coming . . . bloody hell—he nearly got us! . . ."

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A big shell bursts with a blinding flash five or six feet away. The terrific impact takes my breath away for the moment; earth, stones and pieces of shell whizz past our ears, whilst the air around is filled with the pungent, stinging smell of high explosives. Ah! this stench of gunpowder, this scent of war, delicious and offensive, inflaming, intoxicating! There's another one coming, aiming straight at us. It strikes the parapet just above my head, almost touching me, but does not explode; instead, it darts straight upwards into the air, with a long shining tail of sparks in its wake.

Our own artillery is answering now—our "whiz-bangs" come skimming just above the trench, bursting a quarter of a second later; and our trench-mortar shells, the huge "flying pigs," are sailing in an arch above our heads, and for a brief moment all other impressions and sounds vanish in their roaring red fire. Red and white star-shells are rising both to the right and left of us, hanging like resplendent arc-lamps above the reeking No Man's Land. . . .

Then the bombardment dies away without any attack from either side. One by one the guns cease firing, and when all is still I again hear the *gyw! gyw! gyw!* of the wild birds passing above my head. A dark form with a big tin on his back comes splashing through the mud up to our post. I say, they are bringing us tea! We get our mess-tins filled to the brim, and never in my life have I tasted anything so delicious! We gulp it

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down in small mouthfulls, keeping it hot by means of a candle stuck into the trench wall. Probably we won't be disturbed any more to-night.

Captain Grafftey comes along on a tour of inspection. It seems that we have been specially favoured by fortune, for only one or two men have been hit. . . .

"Well, the show to-night wasn't so bad either," says one of the old fellows who had been out ever since 1915. "It was ever so much worse that time at —— and at ——." So I dare say we've still got something to look forward to!

"SUICIDE VALLEY," NEAR VIMY,

March 29th.

I am sitting on the floor of our dug-out on my tin-hat, writing with the paper on my knees. My bayonet is stuck into a wooden post, and a candle (I have learnt by experience that the candle is a *sine qua non* of modern warfare) is stuck to it. All around me, my comrades in this dug-out, some nine or ten men, are likewise writing letters or playing poker. One of them has pulled off his shirt—it is very hot down here—and is submitting every crease and fold to a most conscientious inspection, apparently with satisfactory results.

We weren't half pleased to be relieved last Sunday night. Not that we couldn't have stood it for much longer—we had only been on duty for four nights—for the weather had been lovely and the entertainment quite satisfactory. All the

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same, it is nice to get a change in between. Besides, the last night up there we had been irritated by a most unpleasant bombardment by our own guns, which for some inexplicable reason were firing a hundred to two hundred yards short—it was enough to make a man mad; yet already by 9 p.m. a long file of black forms came creeping through the ditch to relieve us.

We were only two or three miles from this queer valley or ravine, and two hours after we had left our posts we were billeted round about the place in various dug-outs. The trenches here are very much better than at Avion; deep and well-kept and with plenty of dug-outs. I wonder whether they are old German trenches? It is not likely that the British soldiers would have taken all that trouble for the sake of protecting themselves. We were rather crammed for space, ten men to each cave (12 ft. by 6 ft.), but we just managed to squeeze in, eight men beside each other lengthways and two across, when we drew our feet up a bit. We got permission to take off our boots and puttees —what a relief!—and slept like logs.

It is wonderful how easily a man gets accustomed to life out here. We all think that our little home here is the snuggest place in the world. Of course when we were boys we thought such a cave wondrous beyond any expression. We are boys again, that's all.

We enter our dug-out through a hole in the trench wall; there is no door, but a thick rug which can be drawn in case of gas-attacks covers

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the opening. Beside the entrance is a primitive gong arrangement, consisting of an old shell-case, to be sounded as a warning to the inmates. A staircase, from ten to fifteen yards in length, narrow and slippery, and consisting of nothing but pieces of wood stuck into the ground as steps, leads down into the darkness, terminating in a long communication passage, meant to be used as exit in case our other passage should cave-in or be blocked. From this passage a number of smaller separate caves are scooped out, supported by pit-props against their walls and ceiling—otherwise they would collapse when the big shells explode above. The floor simply consists of mud which is covered by several layers of our splendid rubber sheets. But it's impossible to do justice to our dear little home by mere descriptions! The dirt and the vermin, the thick, full-flavoured air—all this only serves to increase our feelings of comfort when we sit together here, warm and safe, chatting, singing, and burning our fingers vainly endeavouring to make a basin of porridge boil over a sardine-tin filled with bacon-grease and with a wick made of rags from a piece of old sandbag! We now get food in plenty, but those four days at Avion when we were kept on small rations have given us insatiable appetites.

Of course we aren't allowed to remain here at our ease all the time. Frequently, far too often, the peace is broken by a malicious order to come up—well, in any case, like whales, we should probably have to come up to the surface every now and then

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for air! There has been a hell of a fight south of us during the last few days; the guns have been booming incessantly. A couple of times they have called us out when we were sleeping most soundly in order to stand some hours in the trenches in the pouring rain, in case the fight should be coming our way—or perhaps it was just the Colonel feeling a bit nervous.

Twice, Monday and yesterday, we have been on fatigue, digging trenches. As soon as it grew dark we were taken across the ravine, far away into the open country, where a whole new row of reserve trenches was being constructed. They were marked off most practically by means of white tape showing in the darkness. Each man got three or four yards of trench to dig—not easy work by any means in the inky black night and beastly stony ground. We worked like niggers—at last almost minus our clothes, the perspiration trickling down our faces, and our hands blistering all over. But in spite of such praiseworthy efforts, we only succeeded in finishing our allotted task in time by making the trench very much less deep and wide than it really ought to be. Fritz behaved himself on both occasions; a few stray machine-gun bullets came zipping high above our heads at intervals, otherwise is was just the everlasting roar of the distant guns south of us, and the usual signal-rockets and Verey lights along the front line.

Last Tuesday our provision stores ran out and Jack and I went out on a foraging expedition—

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with a very vague permission—some distance behind the lines, to the village of Vimy, to take in new supplies. Of course the place was all in ruins: nothing left but heaped-up masonry and cellars; but in one of the biggest of these we found those grand people, the Y.M.C.A's, installed, and we rushed with enthusiasm towards the sign of the Red Triangle, so clearly pointing out the way to Heaven. This was the land of plenty: we were allowed to drink any amount of cocoa free of charge, and we secured whole stacks of notepaper and purchased a big supply of chocolate, biscuits, dried apricots and candles for the whole of our section.

Coming home we nearly copped it. It is not without reason that this place is called "Suicide Valley." It looks so safe and peaceful that one is tempted to go out into the open—when all of a sudden a score of shells will come along like an evil hailstorm. Jack and I had almost reached the spot in the walls of the ravine where our trenches begin when the storm broke. We threw ourselves flat down into a shell-hole and felt just as if we were being skinned with the shells bursting all around us. At the first breather between the explosions we jumped up and skipped like rabbits into the trench and down to our safe dug-out. They didn't get us this time, after all.

To-day we have again stolen down to Vimy, but we got nothing but disappointment for our trouble; the place where yesterday the Y.M.C.A. bid us welcome was now one yawning shell-hole.

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We had a bath last Wednesday. I had not dared think of the possibility of a proper wash till we got to Berlin! We marched off Tuesday night at 10 o'clock on an endlessly long march in the dark, across naked hills full of deep white shell-holes, and eventually arrived at what was formerly the village of Souchez, and were billeted very decently in a big corrugated-iron hut. Next day was an off-day and we lounged about along the valley, looking at the new grass sprouting in the ditches and at the ruins of the church of Ablain St. Nazaire. Here we were fairly safe against Fritz's guns: we had the big hills, Vimy Ridge and Notre Dame de Lorette, between us and them!

The baths were first-class, deliciously hot shower baths, and afterwards clean underwear, perhaps not actually clean, but certainly far better than the rags we wore. My only difficulty was to find a pair of socks to fit my feet. The Canadians with their small American feet are always chaffing me about my elephant feet.

We spent the afternoon at the Y.M.C.A. and returned to the trenches by the light of the full moon.

THE SUNKEN ROAD, LIÈVIN,

April 3rd.

We have got fine weather again, sunshine and summer, and everything is well with us. Last Saturday when we arrived here it was pouring, and the world was dirty and disgusting.

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This, then, is the front line again, but an ever so much better part than Avion with its ruins and rubbish heaps. We now live in little caves and tunnels dug into the slopes on the sides of a deep sunken road cutting through a hill-crest. At the foot of the hill between the German trenches and ours is a submerged meadow like a big lake almost; it is really the Souchez rivulet dammed up, but it enables us to feel at our ease here, for there is no fear of German patrols crossing! Ease—well, to a certain degree. At the moment, at any rate, I am very comfy, writing letters on the see-sawing end of a plank protruding from a pile of boards on the roadside: Sam and Chriss (who have now come over to us from England) are making Irish stew inside our cave just beside me; the smoke from the cooking can be seen a long way off, so fate will probably overtake us in the shape of the sergeant-major or a German shell! But at night we are put to all sorts of odd jobs, and can't reckon with more than two to three hours' sleep at a time.

The hardest job of all is carrying ammunition and corrugated-iron sheets and all that kind of stuff from the transport lines through the trenches up to the firing line. The trenches themselves are very good here, deep and narrow, but after rain they get rather bad—the clayish slush wobbles right up about one's ankles and you curse the ammunition boxes which catch against the trench walls, knocking you black and blue with their sharp edges. Last night Chriss came back into

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the dug-out all but weeping with exhaustion, despair and rage. He had worked for hours dragging up a heavy half-cylindrical corrugated-iron sheet which was just a little bigger on every side than the dimensions of the trench. Poor fellow, when he arrived he was at boiling-point in every way!

What is more interesting, however, is going down to Avion to fetch planks and boards for our dug-outs. It is about half-an-hour's walk eastwards through the trenches—and it is rather thrilling, raking about amongst the shattered heaps of odds and ends, hauling forth all manner of strange things. The first time I went down there I proudly dragged a large heavy beam from under a collapsed roof, forgetting the narrowness of our trench for the moment, which made it necessary for me to carry the damned thing all the way home with my arms stretched high above my head.

We grope about in inky darkness, but now and then a star-shell soaring up from somewhere lights up the place, enabling us to find a fresh heap of something. There is no fear of Fritz spotting us here amongst the entangled ruins; I know that much from the time I was on observation post. Now and then a searching bullet whizzes through the air whilst we work. We bend our heads the first couple of times—after that we take no notice. All the same, there is a certain amount of risk even here. This morning at dawn when we returned from our expedition, we passed two of our comrades laid out on the banquette, their

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heads covered by their coats and with reddish-brown stripes on their trousers—"gone west."

For the two first nights here I was out on patrol duty in front of our lines with Lieutenant Scott, Sam and Fatty Woodworth.

It is most awfully thrilling the first time. You creep in single file from the front trench, out into the darkness of No Man's Land! We sneaked noiselessly along the line until we found the opening made for us to slip through; a "knife-rest"—a wooden cross wound round with wire—was lying beside the hole to serve as a stopper. We had our rifles, of course, and a few extra cartridges in our trouser pockets—that was all. No other kind of equipment, no tunic with shining brass buttons, and no regimental badges to enlighten Fritz if we didn't come back.

No Man's Land is one maze of shell-holes: dark, silent, desolate. You fall into a mud-pool and crawl up again only to tumble in another. Up again—down once more—as noiselessly as possible!

A star-shell shoots into the air and the ground around you shows wet and black in the sharp light. We stop at once, standing immovable, resembling—so we hope—old stumps of trees. As long as you are new to the work you quite expect to hear the German machine-guns, "typewriters," open fire, but nothing happens and you soon learn to take things more easily. Really, there is no point in patrolling these parts since the enemy is right over on the opposite shore of the lake, so there

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is little chance of meeting his patrols here and so test our efficiency at bayonet fighting!

You return at last to your empty dug-out indescribably muddy—even according to our ideas. The others are on fatigue, so you spread your rubber sheet over the rough and slippery ground, roll yourself up in a knot beneath your blanket and great-coat and enjoy a glorious sleep for four hours. There is surely no place in the world like the front for real exquisite enjoyment! I have invented a patent: I always keep some sand-bags rolled up inside my rubber sheet and before settling down to sleep, I pull two or three of them on each leg and tie them just above the knee; it prevents my blanket from getting soiled by my muddy legs and they keep my feet warmer.

Our dug-out isn't anything to boast of; nothing but a small and narrow tunnel dug into the slope at the side of the road. When we arrived here the other day, having marched from "Suicide Valley" and been on patrol duty afterwards for four hours, I was so tired that I just sank down on the floor and slept splendidly; but the stench in the dug-out was so suffocating that we began digging next day and beneath the very spot where I had been sleeping we found the sorry remains of an old Fritz! All in all it seems to me, though, that the stories of stinks and decayed bodies are very much exaggerated. From what I had read before coming out, I had pictured No Man's Land as being full of dead bodies—sticking in the mud or hanging on the wire; yet, as far as I am able to judge, this

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is quite wrong—like so many of the other descriptions of the horrors we read in the books and newspapers.

We are working hard enlarging our dug-out and bringing in heaps of planks down from the village. In a few days we should have a nice little home for we are even making wire bunks!

Had we been Germans we would have dug deep down into the earth and made real bomb-proof dug-outs for ourselves. The Germans love hard work! The Canadians are just the other way about: they'd risk any chance rather than take the trouble to dig in earnest. Well, we have to pay for our recklessness and laziness now and then. This morning, for instance, a shell came whizzing right into the dug-out opposite ours and smashed the whole show; three men were killed and a fourth badly wounded. We helped to carry them out—poor boys, they were torn to pieces. I am thankful that our little home is on the north side of the trench! The wounded man was placed on a stretcher and two men carried him to the dressing station. Fortunately the worse wounds do not hurt much just at the time, from what I can see. The fellow himself had no idea how badly he was hit, but he noticed that there was a lot of blood on his clothes and on the canvas of the stretcher, and asked the two bearers what was the matter with him. "You've just got a few scratches, old man, so you'll get a nice little time in Blighty!" They stuck a cigarette between his lips, and he appeared to be quite easy; but the whole lower

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MARCHING EASTWARDS

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WAR'S DESOLATION

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part of his body was smashed and he died before he reached the hospital.

Every morning we have to go through the deadly dull ceremony known as "Stand to." Even having been on fatigue all night in the trenches, or having crawled through shell-holes on patrol duty doesn't exempt you. At 5 a.m., when it's still dark, we are called out from our warm nests to stand shivering and ill at ease in the firing trench for an hour or so. The explanation given is that the German surprise attacks are generally launched at daybreak. I myself am more inclined to regard it as a mystic tradition from the days of William the Conqueror or Wellington. But *Post Tenebris Lux!* When Lieutenant Scott and the sergeant come round on inspection about 6 a.m., they bring with them a big jar of rum, and before we are dismissed we each get a bumper of the deep brown stinging stuff. It tastes disgusting but the effect is wonderful. There are always some of the boys darting off after having got their allotted share, to make a long detour, appearing again, shivering and sleepy, lower down the line with a naïve—but hardly ever justified—trust in the absent-mindedness of the sergeant! Then back we go to our dug-out and tea and bacon, and—praise the gods—generally another little nap as well.

Jack, Sam and I are always together, and we have now adopted Chriss Nielsen as the fourth musketeer. Chriss had all but forgotten to speak Danish after his seventeen years in Canada and U.S.A., but he and I have a good long talk together

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whenever we get a chance—how beautiful one's mother-tongue sounds!—and now he is once more the bright little Copenhagen *piccolo*.

By the way, Sam, Chriss, and I nearly got into a scrape yesterday. It would have been hard luck after only a fortnight at the front. We had obtained leave to go back behind the lines to a place called "The Brewery"—where they have fitted a water-tank in a former German gun position near a ruined brewery—in order to fill our own and comrades' water-bottles. The Germans, on their side, were fully aware of the constant run on this water-tank—so now and then a shower of shells was sent that way, with the result that the trenches round it had been entirely razed. A number of shells came shrieking over our heads just when we arrived at the last bit of cover on our way, about a hundred yards from the tank. We halted in a big shell-hole to take counsel before going out in the open. Come back waterless we couldn't—so up we jumped from our cover and raced across the open whilst there seemed to be a slight lull in the bombardment. But we hadn't got half-way across before six or eight big shells suddenly came roaring down upon us. One of them struck the ground between Chriss's feet but didn't explode; another headed straight in my direction and exploded some ten yards away! "Napoo!" thought I. "Done!" One of my arms was jarred right up to the shoulder-blade, whilst the dixie was flung out of my hand. We reached the covered position round the tank in

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another second or two and were received by the guard with a roar of laughter. I ventured a side-long glance at my arm—I had expected to see the blood spurting from the stump—but it was all right; maybe only a stone had hit it. Chriss and Sam also discovered that they had escaped without a scratch—so now we could enjoy the joke! Shortly afterwards the firing stopped altogether, and I was able to go out and fetch my dixie.

There's very little water to be spared for washing—naturally; yet we have to shave every other day, and then use what water is left over for rubbing the worst dirt off our faces and hands. We are all equally dirty out here, so it doesn't matter in the least; after all, you can only carry a *certain* amount of mud about with you—on your clothes and boots—the rest drops off gradually of its own accord. And strange though it may seem, I have not felt a single louse biting me yet!

A man may sometimes earn distinction for talents which he would never have imagined he possessed. I've already gained a certain amount of notoriety in the battalion as a—linguist! At various times I have had occasion to tell some of the officers that I am a Dane, and the answer has invariably been the same: "Ah, yes—you are Dennison—the man who speaks all sorts of languages!" That's me, who have always felt ashamed of my poor German, my execrable French, and my inability to learn to speak decent English! But the Canadians know no foreign languages; to them it seems incredible that anybody should be

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able to understand English, French, German, Danish, Norwegian and Swedish! I may be taken on as interpreter one of these days and rise to untold heights of fame!

This morning Corporal MacCollar came into our dug-out with a whole bundle of letters from home! . . .

THE BREWERY,

April 7th.

This week is a real week of rest for Sam, Jack and myself. We have nothing whatever to do beyond looking after a water-tank, the one we went to the other day to fetch water. It is really quite unnecessary to place a guard here; the little we can do is to supervise the soldiers who come to fetch water and to see that they don't waste the gifts of God in a wanton way. But nobody takes any notice of our admonitions. Well, we aren't here to criticise the General Staff . . . we rejoice in the glorious spring weather and are thankful for a chance of sleeping as much as we like, for maybe we shouldn't get to Berlin any quicker if we were to use our strength in scooping mud away all and every day.

We are in an old German gun position; a small square room with mighty thick concrete walls and a roof constructed of several layers of old rails laid crosswise and concreted. Such a house ought to stand long after the Pyramids themselves have collapsed! There is just sufficient room inside for a big rusty iron tank. I am sitting on

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the top of it writing letters and banging my heels against its sides. One of us has always to be on guard, but we arrange the turns to suit ourselves. As far as I can see none of our superiors takes the slightest interest in our doings here. We each of us take four hours duty and eight hours off alternately.

During the day in this pleasant mild weather, it is quite good fun being on guard duty. There is a fine view from here over the wasted, lifeless countryside, and now and again things *do* happen. A moment ago, a German 'plane was shot down some hundred yards from here, after a long and embittered combat up in the clouds. It was all that I could do to restrain myself from rushing to the spot on the off-chance of making a prisoner.

The nights, on the other hand, are deadly dull, and the four hours on guard seem endless whilst one sits half-asleep on the edge of the tank. You feel almost grateful to Fritz for sending an odd volley of shells over by way of a change. There is a small possibility of one of them finding the little door—but in that case I wouldn't have time to realize what was happening! But our home here is absolutely bombproof, except perhaps against the biggest shells. It is really quite thrilling sitting here in safety and hearing them rage and smash against the walls outside.

This, then, was a brewery in the days of Peace. The parts above the ground have been blown to pieces and have disappeared altogether, but the huge cellars are quite intact and the whole of our

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battalion is billeted down there—excellent quarters ("The Brewery" is known as a little paradise), with wire bunks, stoves and room for all sorts of fun. To the men down there in the dark, windowless cellar, there is little difference between day and night. . . . The boys come and go, play cards and make tea and porridge at all hours of the day. One ascends the slippery steps after eight hours' sleep expecting to greet the early morning sun, only to find that he is just disappearing in the west.

Sam, Jack and I are alone here on guard; most of the others are out on fatigue every day, carrying ammunition and rations up to the front line, digging trenches and putting up barbed-wire—even the Canadians must do a certain amount of work. But Sam and I are being favoured because we took part in a small expedition last week. . . .

Coming out to the front, I was prepared to face unendurable hardships and nerve-wracking sufferings. These may come, of course, but so far we have not really been put to the test. I longed to see what a battle, a bombardment, a raid was like—and, of course, we have seen a bit already. But never did I dream of such rich opportunities of fun and merriment—as, for instance, this little nocturnal expedition!

Standing in the trench early one morning, I happened to hear the officers planning a raid, a little nightly surprise on the enemy's lines, and of course I simply *had* to seize my chance! At first Lieutenant Scott was rather reluctant as I have had

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very little front-line experience as yet, but I left him no peace until he gave in. Sam, too, clamoured to be taken on and also received permission.

At one of our outposts a few days back, a lieutenant and five or six men had been surprised by a hostile patrol near Avion and had either been killed or taken prisoners; only the lieutenant being lucky enough to tear himself free and escape across No Man's Land.

It was by way of retaliation, I suppose, that the 42nd Battalion received orders to send over a small patrol and bring home a couple of prisoners. But this order must have originated in the brain of some exalted party behind the lines with no real knowledge of our position—its advantages and drawbacks! To plan a raid from the sunken road was a wild idea—but an absurd act may, perhaps, be a wise thing now and again—in war as well as in peace.

The hill above the sunken road was transversed by trenches and covered by wire, whilst the enemy's position at the other side of the submerged meadows was no doubt equally strongly fortified and impossible for a small party of men to force. But through the water, near the German line, ran a tall railway embankment, scarred by shell-holes. German observation posts were no doubt to be found there—so that was the place for our attack.

We were six going out: Lieutenant Scott, a young Montreal artist with a regular artist's mane; Sergeant Young; the tall, swarthy, unruly corporal MacCollar; a little, brisk fellow, Whitton; and the two recruits, Sam and I. I am sure that

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the impossibility of the undertaking was clear to everyone of the party from the very outset, but we didn't mind in the least—during the morning hours, at any rate. Could any young recruit hope for a more glorious initiation? We cross the lake at dead of night, wading or swimming—steal up to a German observation post, rush upon them with knives and bombs like a devastating thunderstorm, and triumphantly drag the survivors back as prisoners!

Our aerial photographs gave a very clear idea of the position: the end of the railway embankment was connected with the German lines, and it would seem that their trenches ran on along the base of the north embankment, with observation posts here and there. The little lake which we had to cross would be about a couple of hundred yards broad, but it appeared even and shallow. Lieutenant Scott had sounded it the previous night and thought that we should be able to ford it all the way across.

Our equipment was to be quite simple. No tunic or helmet, just a shirt or trousers and a woollen cap. Rifles and bayonets would be in the way if we had to swim part of the distance—each man was therefore only given a hand-grenade and a revolver; rather unwieldy weapons in a night fight. I tried to find a short axe, but there was none of the size I wanted. I therefore took my old hunting knife, oiled it well and put it in my trouser pocket.

We had bombs in plenty but were rather short

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of revolvers. Corporal MacCollar, whilst out on patrol some nights previously, had met a German officer with a fine big automatic. . . . Lieutenant Scott had bought it from MacCollar at a good price, but the battalion possessed no others. In the end, however, we succeeded in wheedling and bribing various officers and sergeants to lend us five revolvers of various makes (we weren't given a chance of practising with them before setting out; it was simply taken for granted that we knew all about them!).

Some wire-cutters were necessary; after a while someone discovered a couple of rusty pairs somewhere in the mud, so two of the boys were ordered to clean them and get them into working order before nightfall.

But Lieutenant Scott, having experienced the coldness of the water, had scruples: "When we reach the other side, we shall be so chilled that we shan't be able to move—there's only one thing to do, we must take a jar of rum along with us and have a stiff tot before we attack!"

Yet what about swimming with such equipment? We unanimously declared this to be impossible, so after some discussion the joiners were instructed to make three small rafts, little wooden trays really, —just big enough to carry our arms and the precious jar of rum. Scott and Young had one between them, MacCollar and Sam the second, and Whitton and I took charge of the third. So that we shouldn't exhaust our strength prematurely, half a score of men were ordered to carry the rafts down

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to the lake, and having done so, were to stay down there ready to cover our retreat by opening fire at the embankment.

My friends in England had sent me a rubber air cushion which was my nightly comfort; this I folded and pocketed, with the idea of tying it round the neck of my prospective prisoner as a lifebuoy—otherwise he might drown before we got him safely home!

Everything was inspected and found O.K, and we then got the afternoon off.

It poured with rain in the evening so the boys were not sent out on fatigue. We sat together in our dug-out, laughing and talking to cover the touches of stage-fright that crept upon us—upon me, at any rate—as the zero hour drew nigh and the presentiment of what might happen became more and more vivid. I handed over my letters and souvenirs to Chriss, and bade him see that they were sent home. . . .

By midnight we were ready for the start. Our comrades gave us a last cheer and we six went up to the front trench, where Captain Grafftey and some other officers stood waiting to see us off. Some idiot had got the idea that we would be sure to lose our way in the dark unless we had some clue of Ariadne to hold on to! Of course we were able to find our way home—otherwise we should have been utterly unworthy of our entrusted task. But nevertheless they gave us a big coil of thin telephone wire to hold on to, one end being fastened somewhere in the trench.

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Then out into the darkness—through an opening in the barbed-wire entanglements. . . . .

Halfway down to the lake, our wire caught on to something (as was to be expected) and broke somewhere behind. Lieutenant Scott went back to look for the end, and there we stood, waiting for half-an-hour, the rain soaking our shirts and trickling down our legs. At last he returned without having found the broken end, so we threw away the whole coil with no little relief.

Stumbling along across shell-holes and water-logged ground, we reached the water's edge and found our comrades waiting for us with the rafts. As we had been delayed so long they had almost given up all hope of seeing us, and were now on the point of opening fire on our party! The rafts were gently pushed out into the water and we followed, in pairs. It was a most disgusting lake; our feet stuck in the deep mud—each step was an effort, which made the water splash up above our ears. Twice we were caught by barbed-wire under the water which ripped our trousers while we were cutting away blindly with the cutters. The water was bitterly cold, I gasped for breath and felt my body stiffen as the muddy water rose higher and higher. But when it reached up to our chests the tension of thé nerves relaxed and it wasn't really unpleasant from now on.

Three or four times during our crossing Fritz sent up a star-shell, illuminating the surface of the water, the embankment and the two dead trees towards which we were making our way. We stood

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as stiff as statues, expecting a volley every time, and when the dazzling light of the rocket had died away, we still stood blinded for some seconds, in inky darkness and pouring rain.

After twenty minutes' wading, we were something more than half-way across, and still the water only reached up to our chests. Everything was all right so far, the railway embankment discernible—dark and distinct against the sky to the N.E. But suddenly we stepped over an edge—having probably reached the ordinary bed of the River Souchez—into a bottomless deep! Now we would have to swim with the rafts between us, and we glided silently away from the bank. But after a few strokes Whitton failed. He splashed about blindly, with his hands above his head, and seized hold of the raft for support. Bombs and revolvers were flung into the water, he himself disappearing simultaneously with a piercing yell. That settled the fate of our expedition. Sam got hold of Whitton's shirt, and hauled him back to shallower water, but after having so clearly revealed our intentions to Fritz, further advance was out of the question. Angry and disappointed, Lieutenant Scott gave the order for retreat: "Get out of this damned hole as quick as ever you can, all of you!"

But now we found that one of the rafts—the one carrying Scott's revolver and the jar of rum—had drifted away towards the enemy. A star-shell shooting up at the same moment revealed it to us, gently swaying on the troubled waters, some

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twenty yards away. Could we leave these cherished objects to become an easy prey for the Germans? I volunteered to go and fetch them back, for our short experience had proved to me that it wasn't nearly so difficult, considering the icy water and our trousers, puttees and big hobnailed boots, to swim here as I had expected. Surely there couldn't be any German posts up on the embankment, otherwise we should not have been let off so easily —but all the same, the embankment loomed pretty black and uninviting, only fifty yards off. I took care to proceed as silently as I could, and reaching the raft safely, I turned and pushed it carefully along in front of me. Meanwhile, however, Lieutenant Scott was growing uneasy, and at last he set out to find me. He had just reached to where I was swimming—luckily, I was nearly back by then—but that did for him: he too caught hold of the edge of the raft and disappeared into the black depths, followed by the revolvers and rum! I splashed about in the darkness and at last got hold of something—his long hair, I think—and together we reached shallow water, where Sam was ready to help us.

Everything was lost except life. The retreat was one of wild confusion; with jumping and leaping through mud and water and brutal duckings—whenever a piece of wire caught our trousers. "Fear filled the men—and they ran across the ridges—home from the Hafs Fiord—longing alone for mead."[1]

[1] Old Norwegian Saga

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I myself ran back across No Man's Land, doubled up with laughter, which deeply shocked Lieutenant Scott. We had started out as valiant, invincible heroes—and half an hour's cold ducking had reduced us to screaming hens!

We went down into the Headquarters' dug-out in order to hand in our sorry report. Here we were given dry underwear, shirts and socks, and as much rum and tea as we could swallow. The whole of the sunken road was one stream of mud and slush now after the rain, and we could only proceed by balancing on the sleepers of an old disused tip-cart line which used to run here. Sam and I, however, were totally unfit to walk home—we had to crawl on our hands and feet all the way. . . . Oh, rum's the stuff to give the troops!

Of the rest of the night I have only a hazy idea. I dimly recollect Sam and I sitting on our wire bunks roaring Danish and Gaelic songs together whilst we devoured stacks of cold plum pudding which belonged to the section. Anyhow, next morning the floor of our dug-out was strewn with empty tins. . . .

LIÈVIN,
April 20th.

This district was once the most fertile, most densely populated part of France. . . .

Coming up from our nice deep cellar into the shattered, stinking rooms above, packed with brickbats and filth, we look out over a small shell-holed valley to the town of Lens behind—a

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desert, a heap of ruins, a whole town smashed and devastated, dreary beyond words in these snowy and sleety days of April. Nothing left but clammy, musty cellars beneath piles of bricks and lime, splintered boards and broken furniture. For a year the sharp teeth of the English shells have slashed and lacerated the town and the whole country round here; and scores of French, English and Canadian battalions have bled to death among the hills to the west and on the outskirts of the town, in the desperate attacks which forced the Germans back from their lines, step by step. Liévin, where we are now billeted, is a big suburb of Lens; the front line now goes right up to the town, the trenches terminating among the ruins in a network of narrow ditches and muddy listening posts.

During the day there is no sign of life to be seen among the gravel-heaps over there. The whole waste-land looks grey and forgotten, like a landscape on the moon. Now and again, one of our big shells bursts in the German trenches, forming a new crater in between the numberless old ones, and throwing a huge, feathery cloud of dust and rubbish high into the air. But during the night every listening post is fully occupied; the trenches are alive with soldiers on some kind of fatigue; the machine-guns send a rattling volley into the darkness every other moment, whilst Verey lights and multicoloured signal-rockets show up the front line far out in the night towards north and south.

From our lazy life of guard duty at the water-

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tank, we were marched up here last week to a most disagreeable job on listening post in this abomination of desolation. An endlessly long march it was, through trenches becoming gradually more and more narrow and troublesome, ending at last in a slushy, slimy drain, where we fought our way through a confused mass of barbed-wire, broken planks and old bedsteads. The listening post at the end of our journey was hidden behind a railway embankment, quite a decent place to spend the night—as things go here—well protected against hostile machine-guns. But the weather has been wretched lately, drizzling rain, with the temperature just above freezing point, and a piercing north-east wind cutting right through leather jackets and great-coats to our very marrow.

The night is long in such weather. . . . We stand half-frozen in our trench, rocking to and fro, our boots "swapping" in the sticky mud, trying hard to keep awake and alert, and wishing that something —anything—would happen. I try all the time to keep my thoughts fixed upon something pleasant, but by degrees the subjects of meditation run short. I try to rehearse, word by word, some half-forgotten poem:

"*A scent of Summer roses*
Is wafted to and fro;
A small and sunburnt Cupid
Sits swinging on a bough.
Two lemon-coloured butterflies
Right merrily are playing,
. . . . .
And scarlet poppies swaying."

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Or Kitty and I have gone from New York to Long Beach for a swim, and we are now sitting afterwards in the warm, silent dusk on the soft sand roasting marshmallows. . . . Or it is after the War, after the victory, and I am coming home —down the path from the station, past Ewald's Hill, where as boys we dug out the badger from his burrow, along the meadow; there is the yellow wall and the red-tiled roof showing behind the old chestnut trees. . . . Home again. . . .

It feels almost a relief when your turn comes to take the place of the man at the listening post. Flat on your belly on the slope of the embankment, with only your head above the edge, looking out for any movement among the dreary ruins in front. (The other night I fell asleep at my post, but thanks be, nobody spotted me!)

A hundred yards east of us, a similar embankment runs across the valley, parallel with ours; behind it, the Germans are lying, they say, watching us just as we watch them, though of course we can't see anything of them. Every now and then a star-shell shoots high into the air from Fritz's outposts (why does he use so many star-shells when we apparently never use any?), and the desolate waste of No Man's Land, with its shell-holes and barbed-wire entanglements, lies sharply outlined in black and white; whilst the dazzling rocket sinks slowly to earth and dies in the mud with a hiss.

Our guns are booming in a businesslike manner all night; we have got the support of all the

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factories of U.S.A., now. But poor old Fritz can't afford such waste, and for hours he is quite silent and cowed. Then he suddenly retaliates with a violent volley—exactly like a small boy who is driven to exasperation by a strong and persistent tormentor and who at last strikes out desperately and blindly.

But sometimes—and it's a pretty uncomfortable moment—one of Fritz's big, long-range guns or howitzers tries to get at us. The other night a heavy gun—a 5.9 we were told—kept sending over a big shell every five minutes, with pretty accurate aim. Such single shells are more trying to the nerves than anything else, I think. We hear the distant boom when the shot is fired—now how *is* it possible for the sound to travel so much faster than the projectile?—and up comes the shell, heading straight for our post, its hissing increasing for one or two unendurable seconds to a roar—and we lie dazed and paralysed, flat against the ground beneath the flaming crash of the explosion forty—thirty—twenty yards away. The earth trembles with the terrific impact, and the stones spatter against our tin hats.

Slowly, immeasurably slowly, the dawn creeps over the embankment, showing up the dark forms of my comrades leaning against the trench wall; hunched up, collars high above the ears, hands buried in their pockets, and muddy and wet from top to toe. Bless the good old rum! The moment you have swallowed the burning stuff and felt it warming your inside you begin to take a different

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view of the War and the future, and even of the hopeless ruins around you. And when Sam, Jack and I sit in our little cellar-home enjoying our tea and bacon, we feel that life is once more worth living—in spite of the muck and dirt in our shelter, where the ceiling is so low that a man can hardly sit upright, and where the cold is so piercing that we have to cook with our gloves on.

We don't get much time for sleep among the brickbats on the cellar floor; there are gas-guard, rifle cleaning, cooking and letter-writing to be attended to—and all too soon comes the old order: "Stand to!" . . .

But this was last week.

Now we have been sent back to Liévin, a mile or two behind the front line, and are billeted in a fine big cellar under a collapsed house in the one single long street of the town. Ten of the boys are here in the cellar with me, splendid fellows all of them.

We have got a small stove down here which we stuff with fuel till it is red hot and the whole cellar is like an oven. Sam and I have brought down an old bedstead and a huge feather-mattress, musty and rotten from long exposure to the winds and weather, of course, but we cover it with our rubber sheets and both sink down on it to sleep like kings.

Each night we have to be on gas-guard for one hour—but that's nothing Jack and I then walk up and down the quiet street between the ruined houses, talking together about life in general, and

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watching the moon sink to north-west and the signal lights come and go along the front line.

We ought, of course, to get a lot of work done whilst we are resting here behind the first line; but the Canadians take things easy, as ever—a two or three hours' job each night after dark, by way of a change, that's all.

One night we carried ammunition boxes from the tip-carts up to the listening posts; another evening we were ordered to dig out and repair the tumble-down parts of the big communication trench, "Crocodile Trench," but it rained so hard that the mud came down on our heads almost quicker than we could heap it up, so we struck work peacefully and were sent home soon after. Last night we carried wire and iron poles right past our old listening post and put up wire entanglements in No Man's Land, between the railway embankments. We soon got tired of crawling across the narrow trenches and made a short cut right across the open, with the bullets from the machine-guns whistling about our ears. This sort of thing is strictly against the rules, but it saved much precious time.

Already we recruits have been out here for a whole month, and we are old and experienced soldiers by now.

It is amazing how easily one shakes off the comfortable habits and fine manners of civilisation. A month is sufficient time for a man to return into an antediluvian cave-dweller. We have acquired the art of going to sleep anywhere and at any time—whenever we get a chance, in fact; to snatch at

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every morsel of food without considering the legal side of the question; to swallow the spoils thus secured in no time, or mixed with other strange ingredients which have been heated over a half-hearted fire in a mess-tin sadly in need of washing; —and we have learned to regard dangers as pleasant thrills and to look upon death—to a German, to a comrade, to oneself—as a joke.

As was to be expected, every day out here shows up more and more clearly how ineffective, how absolutely foolish as preparatory to up-to-date warfare, was our training in England—not to mention Canada.

There is just one kind of drill, though, which we have been taught to perfection: the use of gas-masks. Twice already during our short stay out here we have been exposed to gas attacks; the warning cry of "Gas!—Gas!—Gas!" has gone from one man to the next all the way down the trench, and we have jerked our mask out of its bag and put it on within six seconds, as taught, and have heard the gas-shells whooping and striking quite near. Perspiring profusely inside the nasty rubber things, we have all sent a grateful thought to the little gas-huts at Bramshott and the sergeants there, who are now instrumental in saving our lives and health. Some few sparks of common sense in the maze of obsolete traditions—but the explanation is that they did not know anything about gas in the time of Marlborough! Otherwise each new day would have found us standing in the parade-ground, striving hard to acquire the trick of

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stretching up the mask with the right arm 9 ins. above first tunic-button—left hand on your back, thumbs horizontal—left foot advanced half a step, toes turned outward at an angle of 45°, etc. etc., at the command: "Battalion . . . present . . . *masks!*" and there would have been brass buttons and knobs, "Two-and-twenty dozen of 'em, all told," distributed all over the masks and the straps.

But there are dozens of other things they ought to have taught us in England—we have found that out already.

We might have learnt to know the darkness: to find our way about after dark; to judge distances; to recognize people and objects in the dark or by moonlight. It seems too stupid that never once in Bramshott did we try to load or fire our rifles except in broad daylight, nor practised in the dark any of the various jobs which a soldier has to do at night out here: to put up wire entanglements, put on a gas-mask, or thrust with a bayonet. . . .

They should have taught us how best to repair minor damages to our outfit and persons: to bandage a barbed-wire gash; patch a hole in our trousers and darn our socks. They should have tipped us the wink as to how to keep our feet in good condition, since the mobility of the whole army is dependent on the soldiers' feet. There is never anything the matter with mine, I am glad to say, but many of my comrades suffer tortures from their blistered and raw feet after marching a few

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miles. But when going out they just handed us one single pair of boots, excellent boots, I admit, but fearfully heavy and hard; and we have to wear them day and night.

We used to shine our brasses and boots every single day in Canada and England, and truly resplendent we looked. Since we came to France I have not once touched brush or polishing rag. Yet in spite of three years' experience of war, these old generals of ours have not yet grasped the fact that a soldier might be all the more valuable to his country for learning a smattering of cooking; the use of an axe; a hammer; a saw; how to protect himself against the vermin plague. But of course such accomplishments were not included in the traditional military training and would not excite admiration on the parade ground!

It is just possible that some of the tricks we learned when doing squad-drill day after day, may come in handy if ever we break through the enemy's lines and have to fight in the open. Up till now, however, this war has been a trench war—what if we had been trained accordingly?

The justification of this singular way of "making a soldier" is, of course, that we, during our training, get inoculated with a certain amount of discipline, and that the discipline—the Prussian mechanical, unreasoning, slavish discipline—is the *alpha* and *omega* of a soldier's training. But then we come to the front, only to find that there is scarcely any real discipline in the trenches—no more than in

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a football team or a Scout camp! The Germans, with their wonderful faculty for order and organization, may find it advantageous and necessary to train each soldier to act as an automaton, but this can't be done with Canadians. Every man here—or, to be quite correct, with very few exceptions—does on the whole do his best to "play the game," and the whole record of the Canadian army in France has shown that this is all that is needed.

But be it as it may, never for one moment had I dreamt that trench-life would be as easy as this; that the authorities in charge would pay such unlimited attention to our wants and requirements; that a month at the front could pass as comparatively easily as it has done for us. When crossing over from England I set my teeth and prepared myself to meet all sorts of privations and hardships—hunger, cold, sleeplessness and inhuman fatigue work—as a MAN . . . if I possibly could! That's what you always read in books and papers about the life of a soldier at the front. But what about the *real* thing?

We have known hunger. I'm glad to say that we are always sufficiently hungry to enjoy to the full our nice hot tea, our bacon and mulligan; but so far we have never been starved, never gone without food for twelve hours running.

True, it has been bitterly cold off and on, and we have shivered at the wet listening posts; yet from my own experience it is far worse to be out for a long run on a motor-bike on a wintry day

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in a cutting east wind. Returning to our dug-out after a wet night, we have even found a whole bagfull of dry socks awaiting us!

We don't get any too much sleep, I know; but quite sufficient for our needs after we have accustomed ourselves to sleep between brickbats and gravel-heaps—folded up like clasp-knives. Never once have we gone without sleep for twenty-four hours.

And as for hard work—why, we ought to be ashamed of the small amount of work we do! Three hours' trench-digging is considered a feat, and the longest march we have on record up till now was only fifteen miles. Easy days all round.

The famous "greys" have kept away from me so far. I dare say they'll come right enough, though. The only serious objections of an animal nature are the frogs and toads which abound everywhere, especially in the trenches near the sunken road. We constantly feel their bodies being squashed beneath our boots.

One thing is getting on my nerves, though, and that is living day in and day out amidst these shattered dead and ruined houses—desolate remains of homes. It is a veritable joy to meet a dapper, yellow dandelion growing gaily among the *débris*, the only live and merry thing in the hopeless waste. We discovered a small, flowering cherry-tree the other day growing between two angles of wall left standing. A small branch of it, stuck into the neck of a bottle, now adorns our cellar-home—standing in its niche like the image of a saint.

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Well, we new recruits have as yet had very little war experience, and have likely enough been especially lucky wherever we have been. At the beginning of the War they can't have had anything like the abundance of supplies and outfits that we now enjoy, and we have not yet been placed on trial by those dreadful endless winter nights. I hold that not until you have been through a real battle have you any right to talk about the toil, the hardships and the sufferings of war. A charge against machine-guns, which leaves you friendless—an all day long deafening bombardment, when the shells pick you out, man by man, in the ploughed-up trenches: such things should test a fellow's strength and manhood, stamping their mark on him for life.

But several of my comrades in this section have been at the front for years, have been through the butcheries at the Somme, the snowstorms of Vimy Ridge, and the mud-pits of Passchendaele. I look around the circle of faces and search in vain for any such traces of inhuman suffering on their features, in their speech or behaviour. Sitting here to-night in the cellar it is not bitter recollections, worn-out muscles and nerves and deadly fear for the coming day that characterize the section. . . .

Poker, till the last franc is lost in laughter; or jolly, outspoken stories about erotic adventures in Paris; or drinks and frays in Liverpool; any amount of songs and jokes—stout-hearted, strong, reckless lads we are down here—free from care just because we stand face to face with death

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every day. . . . Ten *men* are sitting here round the red-hot stove in this warm, cosy cellar! Leave responsibilities and anxieties to the officers . . . and to our poor people at home: it is hard on them, of course! They say that Fritz is going to start another push in a few days, likely enough against our part of the line this time. And the devil of a job we'll get to-night, if the weather doesn't improve, for there will be the whole of "Crocodile Trench" to repair . . . but hell, we don't care a damn!

It is stange to get a paper from home now and again and to lose oneself in recollections of Copenhagen restaurants and the designing-room of the Polytechnic School. . . . But then a shell bursts among the ruins above, a bit nearer than usual, and I wake up with a start as from an unpleasant dream. Oh no, the War isn't newspaper-reading at the breakfast table any longer, or play in the Akademiske Skyttekorps. It *is* true, I *am* at the front, in the real life at the front in France. . . . How good it is!

LIÈVIN,

April 25th.

Man cannot live on bread and bully-beef alone. When we have had a long and dull time at the listening posts, and begin to weary of the show, it's time for a bit of fun. The generals realize our needs, so they arrange for a small raid by way of a change. Officially explained: it becomes necessary

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to raid the enemy's posts now and then to find out about his position and dispositions—and also take a few prisoners.

Last Monday our kind and popular sergeant-major came up to Sam and myself and asked us whether we would like to take part in a new raid —the unsuccessful swim of some nights ago doesn't seem to have hurt our chances. We were of course delighted to have a new opportunity given us, so off we ran to Headquarters and got permission to have our names put on the list. What's more, we, together with some ten others, were sent back from the listening posts (our jolly days in Liévin soon came to an end) right away to "The Brickfields," an old German gun-position in a former brickyard where there is a fine big dug-out with a stove and wire bunks. A rest before the exertions in store!

Yesterday we had the whole position and the plan of attack explained to us. A big mounted telescope, some way back on a rise in the ground and sheltered by parts of a shattered wall, overlooked the enemy's positions, and one by one we were permitted to have a peep. Fritz had barricaded himself well, I must say: what we saw was a railway embankment some fifteen to twenty feet high protected by a wilderness of barbed-wire. The Germans themselves we didn't see, of course, but our aerial photos clearly showed their fortifications behind the wall of the embankment. Our guns and mortars had caused some damage there, though: the embankment itself was pitted with

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shell-holes, and rails and sleepers protruded in wild confusion, whilst in one place the wire had apparently been blown right away. But surely the ever-watchful Fritz would use this opening in his wire as an ideal position for a couple of machine-guns (at least, that's what we ourselves would have done), as a stop-gap until the damage could be safely repaired during some specially dark night? Machine-guns or no—we were to force this breach. . . . Someone in charge had hit on a truly fine plan.

First of all, we were to scare Fritz out of his wits by sending over a swarm of gas-shells (they always tell us that the enemy's gas-masks are very poor, no good at all really, absolutely insufficient to stand against our gas attacks, and that consequently the Germans are scared out of their lives on such occasions! I have no doubt that the little German recruits are told a similar story about our miserably poor masks and our panic terror), causing him to seek shelter in his gas-proof dug-outs. True, we ourselves could not start the attack whilst all this gas was in the air: finding our bearings with masks on would be out of the question—especially at night and in hostile surroundings. But—and now comes *the* point of our subtle plan: we were to wait for another couple of hours in our trenches, when a second shower of gas-bombs would be sent over—only this time *empty* ones! Then when Fritz, grown wise by previous sad experiences, had buried himself underground, we would be on

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him like a flash of lightning. Truly an excellent plan.

We were fourteen men all told taking part in the raid, though only seven were to go the whole way over. The others, Christensen amongst them, were to form our connecting link and reserve. The lieutenant in charge—not our own Lieutenant Scott this time, but another splendid, daring young fellow, Tom Cowan, supposed to be an expert at this kind of raid—the sergeant and I were to head proceedings, provided with wire-cutters, whilst Corporal MacCollar, Sam and two other men would follow close on our heels.

Well, we had a real jolly time last night in our new and fine dug-out, with songs and jokes and good feeling—even if each man had his own private thoughts and matters to arrange before leaving. Helmets and tunics are left behind when a raid is launched—a woollen sweater and an old cap was our whole attire. Late at night we assisted each other in painting our faces black all over with grease and soot, and we looked very awe-inspiring:

But, damn it all, at 11 p.m. a message was sent round to the effect that our splendid plan had to be abandoned, as the wind had veered round to the east and would cause the gas from our shells to drift back over our own trenches and listening posts. We therefore had to content ourselves with sending over empty shells only, trusting that previous experience would make Fritz look out

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for his poor old hide and tuck himself in safely underground.

Just after midnight we stole noiselessly up the long, slippery steps from the dug-out and walked in single file along the dark trench in the direction of the embankment. Arriving here, we found that the battalion south of us were likewise starting a raid, and the Germans, getting the wind up, began to " strafe " us all along the whole line. We were standing in a deep trench and didn't much mind the shelling, but I admit that I was very much afraid after this new turn of events, for the enemy was evidently wide-awake and ready to send us a hearty greeting when we began to crawl across the embankment. I hate this clammy sort of feeling—one is physically wretched and at the same time thoroughly ashamed of one's own wretchedness ! Where's your courage now, when you've got to show up ?

The shelling stopped as abruptly as it had started, and as is always the case, the silence which followed seemed like death itself. We sneaked along as best we could through the dark uncertainty of the trenches, where the broken planks beneath our feet and the snapped wires overhead were constantly hindering our progress. " Wire underfoot ! " " Broken plank ! " " Wire overhead ! " ran the muffled warnings along our file.

We halted on reaching our own part of the embankment, a couple of hundred yards from our usual listening post, near a big opening caused by

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the partial collapse of a culvert. It appeared that we were half-an-hour before our time. So we crept through the opening and sat down on some big concrete blocks, waiting for the zero hour. . . .

The night is a lovely night of spring, calm, soft, with a slight haze. The moon is nearly full, yet it is none too light as it is just on the point of setting in a bank of clouds, and the grey waste of No Man's Land is only dimly visible. But the German embankment opposite lies clear before us. We take note of the break in their wire. It is now only a question of getting across the open land without being fired at on the way!

Punctually at the stroke of 3 a.m. we are to expect the gas-bombs—the empty ones—to come along. For us sitting there waiting on the stones in the dim light of the moon, time seems to stand still. The luminous hands of my wrist-watch creep round slowly, ever so slowly. . . . Everything is quiet and peaceful now; maybe Fritz has settled down again and won't be so keenly on the lookout towards the small hours? Oh! if only that beastly clock would hurry up a bit more—so that we might make a start!

"They ought to be here in a minute now," whispers Lieutenant Cowan—and sure enough, there they are—hissing and whistling right above our heads. Blast those idiots at the guns—they are ever so short of the mark! Instead of going into the enemy's trenches, the bombs drop somewhere in No Man's Land, near our own lines. The

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COME TO THE COOK-HOUSE DOOR, BOYS!

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THE RELIEF COMES UP

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smoke fizzes out of them and drifts towards where we stand, but there is fire in them as well—long poisonous tongues of flame blaze out of the cases, and our bayonets twinkle in the flickering light. The next second we are bent double, out in the open, exposed field, between shell-holes and tangled masses of old wire. In another few seconds we are hiding at the foot of the German embankment. Anyhow, the gas-bombs must have done their work since we got over without being shot at. The Germans must have sought shelter—and we draw deep breaths of relief.

Four of our boys are ordered to wait here, while Lieutenant Cowan, the sergeant and I crawl slowly, carefully, noiselessly, on our hands and knees up the embankment and peep across its top. We have just hit the right place! A couple of big shells have fallen between the rails and torn a hole in the wire entanglement; it will be quite an easy matter to get through. Wire-cutters out—and up and across, slowly, deliberately; first gripping with one hand, and then with the other . . . but in a twinkling, three—four shots from a machine-gun flash in our faces! The next second we are flat on our bellies, down between the rails, all unhurt—but—what's to be done now? Is it all over; have we got to retire at once? Or is it possible for a man to attack against such a belching machine-gun? I look out of the corner of an eye towards Lieutenant Cowan. . . . Will he give the order to retreat? No. Lying flat on his stomach, I can see him getting a Mills' bomb ready . . .

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drawing out the split-pin. The next second he hurls the bomb towards the machine-gun in front of us. A straight hit! In the deafening noise of the explosion, and with the fragments whizzing round our ears, we jump to our feet and attack. Our wire-cutters are gone. I jump recklessly across the entanglement, where the pointed barbs catch my boots and puttees and make me turn a somersault down into a deep shell-hole. Hell! Am I to lie here while the others attack? Freeing myself I flay my hands and trousers, and come through the entanglement; the others have all been caught just like myself, so Lieutenant Cowan and I are the first across the embankment. Not a soul to be seen! Inky darkness and nothing else on this side of the embankment. The machine-gun is not there either—Cowan's shot has done it in all right. Down the slope head foremost we tumble into a hole. Feeling our way, we discover a low trench running along the embankment half-way down the slope; it seems empty and deserted and we follow it north, fumbling along in the dark, Lieutenant Cowan in front, the others following me. . . .

Halt! There is no getting further, the trench as well as the slope itself is blocked with a confusion of wire. There we stand, the seven of us, uncertain what to do next. Suddenly from a dark and yawning chasm immediately below us—a dug-out, most likely—a dozen shots flash right against us. "On your knees!" Lieutenant Cowan and I use revolver and rifle in reply to the German

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salute, whilst Corporal MacCollar and Sam stand close behind throwing bombs. German "sticks" explode around us with deafening crashes. . . . One of them bursts close to our lieutenant, who turns right round and collapses in the trench: Aur-r-r-r-h! I seize his arm and shout into his ear: "Are you badly hurt, sir?" but get no reply. Two of the boys take hold of his legs and drag him a little way back along the bottom of the trench; then they lift him up and carry him between them towards our lines.

We are only four now. The firing from the dug-out below us has in the meanwhile stopped. Aha, they've had enough, then!—but others are coming to the rescue from the south—we hear the tread of many hurrying feet—and standing back to back in the trench, we prepare ourselves to meet them. There they are, along the foot of the embankment, a number of dark forms. . . . Come on, as many as you are—we are here for your sake!

"Eye to eye," quoth Erling,
"Eagles will fight!" [1]

A dazzling star-shell goes up—or maybe it is only the flash of an explosion? Seconds seem hours now, and hours seconds!—and in the light of it we see about ten men in long fluttering cloaks and big helmets closing upon us. But we are fairly covered where we stand, and they will have to take a few steps up the slope to get at us. We fetch a yell which would make them think there

[1] Old Norse Saga

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were twenty of us, instead of four; the Germans, too, are yelling to each other. I shoot the first one, a tall, big fellow, right through the body and he doubles up and rolls down the slope just like a shot hare. Then all is pitch-dark once more. . . .

The German bullets are throwing dust and shingle into our faces from the parapet, and we fire into the dark towards the place from where the shots come as fast as we can pull the triggers, and Sam's bombs burst amongst them, one by one, the flashes showing us two of our enemies twisting round and falling to the ground. Then they've had enough. . . . The survivors turn and disappear into the night, and the next explosion only shows us vanishing grey backs and fluttering cloaks. . . . Then all becomes silent around us. But we, too, have had enough of the game!

Of course we ought to have made some prisoners. But, dash it all, let 'em be! as long as the boys have had time to get Lieutenant Cowan safely back. We hurry off along the trench and back to the spot where we entered coming over, and wriggle through the wire there. I am the last, and creeping across the torn rails and sleepers, I ignite a smoke-bomb (by hitting it against one of the rails) and throw it behind me. "Light ahead and dark behind!" We slide down the slope and gallop across No Man's Land towards our own embankment, into the culvert tunnel. The next second a whole shower of shells flies over No Man's Land. . . . The Germans want to prevent us getting home, or maybe they are afraid

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of our returning in greater numbers. Never mind, we are safe here, except in the case of a very big shell coming along.

In the culvert lies Lieutenant Cowan, bandaged as well as can be done out here. He has evidently got a nasty head-wound, for his face is covered with blood. He is quite blinded, and his mind seems to be wandering a bit. But he has heard us coming and calls out to us: "Brave boys, brave boys, give me your hands!" and we each in turn step up to the dripping stretcher and press his gory hand. . . .

After sunrise, when all was quiet once more, we stole back to the dug-out near "The Brickfield" and gorged on rum and tea. The sergeant reported events, and the night's happenings did not lose anything by being explained to him. Adding up and counting as dead each enemy we had fired at, we found that we had all but annihilated the German army!

Later on, we went back for two days' leave and rest at "Stafford House," a big partly-demolished house on the western part of Liévin.

Somehow or other I had hit my right knee pretty badly—how and where I don't know (it has never really been strong since I hurt it when out ski-ing in Norway), and I couldn't keep step with the others, but came slowly along by myself, dead-tired and gloriously drunk, and every now and then I had to lie down for a while to rest just a wee bit.

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We have had a wonderful rest now.

This afternoon we went behind the front as far as Souchez to get a bath and some clean linen—we were sorely in need of both. The boys we met on our way grinned like anything at seeing our nigger-heads! So now we are ourselves once more; only my trousers and legs are still hanging in tatters after being flayed by the German wire.

We have got heaps of good things to eat, but now my candle is nearly burnt down. . . .

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CAUCORT,
May 6th.

This is all we are going to see of the War for a bit! The comrades of other units will have to look after Fritz now. Our battalion was relieved on the 1st May to enjoy a well-earned rest after an exceptionally long time in the trenches. We marched to Souchez, and from thence further back we rode in big motor-lorries, stowed together and very sleepy. We appeared to be going along all night, but when we arrived at our destination I got out my map and found the name of the village—really quite a short trip.

Now I am sitting on the top of a dike at the edge of a beech-wood, north of Fresnicourt, enjoying the beauty of Spring. The weather changed for the better the very day after our arrival, and the cold winds and icy sleet of April have turned into balmy breezes and azure skies. Round about here the country appears quite untouched by the ravages of war. Small red-brick villages, well-tilled fields and beech copses on the hills just breaking into leaf meet the eye. In France, the oaks and beeches apparently become green at the same time, and the ground beneath the trees is one mass of flowers, just like at home in Denmark—anemones, violets and bluebells. The cuckoo is here, too—and we are still alive to hear him!

We are having easy days now, nothing beyond a few hours' drill in the morning. All the good old familiar terms come back: "Form Fours!"—

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"Slope Arms!" We'd all but forgotten the tricks! Otherwise the day is ours to spend as we choose: I have been taking long walks to the various ancient *châteaux* in the vicinity, most of which are sadly in need of repair.

The first day after our arrival was Chriss's birthday; he is now thirty-two. We celebrated the anniversary and our new-found liberty in a good old spree during the evening—Sam, Jack, Christensen, Brown and Barr. We filled a big basket with all sorts of drinks, from champagne (at six francs the bottle) down to *vin blanc* and beer, and dragged it off to the hills behind the camp where, sitting or lying in the long, soft grass, we sang, laughed and toasted till a late hour.

Christensen is also a Dane. In pre-War days he was a sailor and many other things as fortune favoured him. Here he is a stretcher-bearer—a rotten job and he's just about sick of it by now. One of his duties is to examine the dead bodies for identity discs and souvenirs, etc., which he has to take care of until he can hand them over to Headquarters. I have assisted him on one or two occasions, and I don't blame him for not liking his job—some of the corpses are most fearfully mutilated by the shells.

Our present billets are big huts with deal floors, and the 15th and 16th platoons live together in one of them, packed very close along the walls. A poor exchange for our good cellar at Liévin, and the lovely feather-bed Sam and I used to sleep on there. There are various advantages here, though; for

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example, we are allowed to take off our boots and as much of our clothing as we like, which is a real blessing.

But then they have robbed us of our trousers! The day before yesterday we paraded in the grounds and were each given a blue-green kilt and a khaki apron. I sighed with regret as I hauled off my tattered trousers and put on the heavy kilt instead. Really there is no sense in letting soldiers go to war in such parade equipment. Tradition bobs up its withered old head again! You can't sleep in a kilt, for all the pleats and folds gather together beneath your body into one big hard knot, so that you have to take it off and spread it carefully on the ground. You then lie down on it and let your poor bare legs freeze. . . . To merely step across a barbed-wire fence in waving skirts is difficult enough in this place, but what will our lives be with drenched kilts in slushy trenches is more than I care to think about. I have half a mind to apply for transfer to the Flying Corps—as I originally meant to—just to escape wearing these beastly things.

The front is far away (even if its muffled roar reaches our ears day and night during the twenty-four hours). Our six weeks' trench-duty has already become ancient history—anyway, old enough for me to obtain proper focus of events there. Speaking for myself, the War so far has been nothing but one great and wonderful experience; all my dreams of life's adventures come true. During those days of Lens and Arras I have lived as never before.

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Of course, this view is no doubt very much biassed by my having been in luck's way all round—fine weather, fine experiences, lucky escapes from German shells. I'll probably change my mind when winter comes round again, when we shall have to stand three days on end in the trenches without being relieved, in mud above our knees, as did the 42nd last winter at Passchendaele! And yet Englishmen and Canadians oughtn't to grouse really, coming out as late as they did. What about poor old Fritz? How is he getting on, I wonder, after four long years of semi-starvation in the trenches and cowed at the same time by the iron fist of the Prussian discipline?

On one of the last days before leaving the trenches I was chatting with one of the old soldiers who had been out for nearly two years. Suddenly a shell exploded fairly near and a fragment came singing through the air straight towards us—as such fragments do sing: starting in a high, shrill note and descending gradually to a deep, ominous drone. It hit the trench wall between us and buried itself deep in the clay, an inch or two from another fellow's arm. I drew a deep breath of relief, but he swore at it: "Oh, God damn it all! why couldn't you take my arm and have done with it? I'm sick of this beastly 'ell of a 'ole!"

No man can do more than lay down his life—and already 500,000 young men from every corner of the British Empire have died here on the battlefields of France. Nevertheless, it would seem as if the War to the English—and to the Canadians

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most of all—has not yet become anything but a kind of superior boxing match; not a real, downright job to be tackled in earnest. Things have been looking pretty serious for our cause several times during my stay here, and I have shown my comrades my map and explained to them the narrowness of the strip of land we are still holding near Amiens. What are the chances of the Germans cutting through our communication lines with the French armies here? Wouldn't that finish us off for good? The boys listened to me and laughed: "Rot, my lad—don't you know England wins all her wars?" England has not been conquered for close upon a thousand years now. England rules the waves and half the world—but the British soldier of the line has not yet grasped the fact that this time the Empire is fighting for her very life.

Perhaps this explains our feeling no hatred at all against our adversaries. If one could trust even the merest fraction of the number of stories published in the English and American newspapers, the Germans are filled with inveterate hatred and concentrated wrath against every man and country who dare oppose the world supremacy of "das grosse Vaterland." And the worn-out sons of France are fighting, amidst the sad *débris* of their ruined homes, for the very life of their beloved country which is threatened by their barbaric, hereditary foe. Of course, the strenuous propaganda in England, Canada and U.S.A. has succeeded in so far that it has called up a moral hatred and aversion to a certain theoretical type of fat, goggle-wearing,

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closely-cropped Hun; and I have been told that there are certain naïve souls in some English villages who really and truly believe that the Kaiser every day drinks an early-morning cup of child's blood! We soldiers in the trenches, however, do not share these silly prejudices against our opponent. I honestly believe the average Canadian soldier's feeling—when considering the enemy—to be almost identical with the mixture of vexation and grudging admiration he feels towards a football team which has knocked him and his Club hollow. "Keep your head down, Fritzie boy! If you want to see your *Vater* in your *Vaterland*, keep your head down, Fritzie boy!" we sing to him. And when he does not keep his head down, he may get hit one day—but apart from that we feel no animosity other than the natural feeling against the man who is going to answer your shot. For that matter it is quite the exception for a soldier to be able to say: "I shot so and so many enemies during the War!"—a personal kill is very rare. Of the four to five hundred thousand Germans killed during the fighting with the British armies in France, the greater part by far have fallen victims to shell explosions or machine-gun bullets. A couple of million British infantry have, I take it, served their time in the trenches here; perhaps one out of of every hundred can say that he has actually taken the life of a German, with rifle, bomb or bayonet.

That night during the raid at Lens, I shot one or maybe several Germans. It is not until it is all

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over that you realize, with some feeling of amazement, how very easy a matter it is to kill a man!

When out shooting I have killed numbers of innocent, defenceless beasts. One may be extremely fond of animals and go far out of one's way to rescue some creature in distress; but the moment you are out on the moors with your rifle in your hand, you have only one thought in your head: can I get within range of that roebuck before he spots me? and you kill a wounded hare without minding in the least—so long as you don't get too messed up with its blood.

But when it is a question of human life?

Surely none of my comrades here ever had the slightest doubt about orthodox morals; to them the Sixth Commandment is an indisputable, divine law. But the whole matter immediately takes on an entirely different aspect when their country goes to war. Far from being a fearful crime, it then becomes your first duty, your highest honour, to exterminate as many of the enemy as possible.

To me, the matter stands in a somewhat different light. I am not fighting for my own country (perhaps I am, though, indirectly; an allied victory may bring a reunion of Slesvig and Denmark!); and I do not in the least pretend to seek justification in an ignorant condemnation of the German atrocities. On the other hand, I have no metaphysical scruples, for ten years ago I shook myself free from all religious dogmas and church morals, whilst later on the Sagas and Stirner saved me from the equally untenable categorical

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imperatives of the humanitarians—from the belief in the unqualified rights of man and social duties.

But in Denmark, in our kind little peace-loving country, we had all been brought up with a profound respect and awe for human life. We had lived in a society with a thorough faith in law and justice; we had been filled with human and charitable feelings. Would not those instincts and sympathies, through inheritance and education, have come to form the very foundation of one's nature and view of life, irrespective of what moral theories one might adopt later in life? I admit in fact that I have often thought with no little shame, that I was probably only bragging when I asserted that I wanted to see the front, to take part in a battle. When it came to the point, wouldn't I stand awe-struck, feeling and understanding that a human life is "sacred" in some mystical way? Wouldn't I shrink from the mortal sin of killing an innocent German?

It has been something of a mind-revolution to find that one's love of mankind and respect for human life count as nothing when up against the fighting instinct of desiring to conquer and kill an enemy. You see your opponent going down, hit by your bullet, with the same triumphant feeling as when you shot your first stag: "I've got him!" And when you afterwards think about the fighting and the killing, it is something akin to a young man recollecting his first happy love, and you are filled with a warm glow of gratification—for you have victoriously tried your power and strength in a great adventure. . . .

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ST. HILAIRE,

May 21st.

Jack and I have just been informed that we are to enter for the N.C.O. training course! We are already leaving to-morrow, together with half a score of other fellows here. I fancy the School is to be somewhere near the coast where we shan't be disturbed by the War. All our comrades have congratulated us most heartily and think us jolly lucky. Well, I don't know that I feel any special elation at the thought of becoming a lance-corporal with an extra stripe on my sleeve—we ourselves are none too respectful towards our own N.C.O.'s—yet the corporal of our section, Gibson, is as smart and bright a lad as you could wish for the job. Anyhow, we are sorry to leave the others—just when we had all settled down so beautifully in these billets. St. Hilaire has been an A1 quarter.

We came up here from Caucourt about a fortnight ago, after a day's march of fifteen miles in pouring rain. As we have no waterproofs and great-coats are not seasonable at this time of the year, we tied our rubber sheets round our shoulders with a piece of string, and they protected us to a certain extent against the deluge. But the effect could hardly be called military.

St. Hilaire is a big village of the typical French pattern, with dilapidated farm-houses all interconnected, forming one long street, with some few little shops in between and a number of *estaminets*. The inhabitants, however, are few—chiefly old

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women and children. Big, open stretches of fields surround the village. We are billeted in a tumble-down barn and cart-shed, and everything on this farm looks most shockingly neglected. As a matter of fact, French farming does not inspire admiration in the breast of a Dane. They have given us plenty of straw to sleep on—so this means a plentiful supply of lice. I was beginning to think that all this talk about vermin at the front was nothing but a journalistic invention, but now we give our shirts a most conscientious examination every night, and when morning comes it is to find that new drafts have arrived! Nevertheless, we are thankful for our straw beds, however warm the days are, for it gets chilly towards morning, and our last blanket has been taken away—goodness knows why! We each make our own nest of straw on the earthen floor, spread our kilts on the top of the heap and, using our great-coats as cover, roll into a knot with our knees up to our chins—only as Bairnsfather has it: "You've to get out now and again to rest a bit!"

These, however, are minor worries which do not in any way influence the general state of comfort and happy ease amongst us. Happy as larks, we turn out at seven into the long, wet grass, ready for our porridge and the shaving ritual. The thermometer rises considerably during the day—when we return at noon from morning parade and drill it is almost as hot here as in Canada. The other day Chriss and I went on parade minus our kilts, with only our aprons on—our pants, of course,

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having been discarded long ago. We were caught and severely reprimanded, and it nearly resulted in our falling out with Captain Grafftey. I left my shirt at home yesterday, as this could not be noticed; but it feels most unpleasant with your tunic next to your skin.

There is some sense in the kind of drill they are giving us now. Of course the inevitable parades, squad-drill and rifle-drill must be gone through, otherwise it would be too deadly dull for the Colonel and the sergeant-major. But luckily the superior military leaders have come to the conclusion that, since the War might change any day from trench-war to fighting in the open, it might be just as well to teach us a bit about it while there is yet time. So we are now learning "open warfare" on the big stretches of fields to the N.W. of our camp, towards Linghem. We practise musketry and "advance by sections" and trample down the young wheat in the fields during some three or four hours of work every day.

Yesterday we were marched down to Lozingham to a big division practice—and it was glorious fun! With the sweat pouring down our faces, we rushed about all over the dusty fields, firing at each other with blank cartridges. Afterwards we had our supper in a small beech copse, and returned in the cool of the evening, by the light of the full moon.

Jack and I are now lying at the top of a small hill near the Lillers road writing our letters. Every day Jack scribbles some five or six sheets to his wife in

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Canada in his small, neat hand, but he never tells me anything about his private affairs nor talks of her to us. That's how they are, these Englishmen. Chriss is quite a different type—the average Dane is not very reserved, as we know, and I don't think there's one single event in Chriss's life which he has not confided to me on our afternoon walks about the country here. Every penny of his hard-earned money he had ventured in a café in Winnipeg, and he tells me the most wonderful stories of this place —"The smartest café in the whole town, with the best girls to be had!" But when Canada went dry it meant collapse for his business, naturally. Times out of number he was summoned to court, suspected of illicit dealings—since it was not always possible to induce policemen to keep one eye shut when passing his place. According to his own story, however, his round cherub-like, boyish face so disarmed the judges that they let him off on the spot.

The other day he spent most of the time sitting on the floor of our barn, victim of an attack of the blackest melancholy. The girl in London had not written! (A charming young lady, by the way, judging from her highly treasured photo.) Now and then he passed a bitter remark about womenkind in general, and his wife in Montreal in particular. My friends in England have just sent me H. G. Wells' *God the Invisible King*, and Chriss got hold of it and studied it all day with the greatest interest. When evening came he returned the copy to me, sorely disappointed; for he's tried ever so

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many new religions, but none of them—even Wells—would give a man the right to have more than one wife at a time—so what was the good of them all?

The belated letter from London came to-day, and his mood has changed accordingly; he talks and jabbers the whole time![1]

Christensen, I am sorry to say, has deserted. He never could get on with the sergeants, and at last they got him into clink—most unjustly, he thought, so he broke out and made off! If they catch him—will he be "shot at dawn" as an example? It's unpleasant for Chriss and myself to hear the general comments: "Oh, of course—such a damned Swede was sure to get cold feet and beat it sooner or later!"

From our little hillock here we overlook miles and miles of fertile French land—cornfields around red-tiled villages, and right at the edge of the S.E. horizon, huge cone-shaped slag-heaps are to be seen. Peace everywhere—no sign of war's footsteps so far—except in the places where we have been at work. After a company of soldiers have tramped and stamped for hours in a rye field there is very little left!

French and English national characteristics are so vastly dissimilar that it is difficult to pass a fair judgment on the French people we come across here behind the Front—chiefly old men and women, filthy and hideous most of them, with rude, noisy children. And perhaps they find it even more difficult to understand and tolerate us. I fancy

[1] Sorry, Chriss, you don't mind, old man do you?

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most of my comrades are inwardly puzzled and disappointed: are these the sons and daughters of the noble, highly-cultured France whom we set out to liberate from the clutches of the Teutonic barbarians? The peasants here have an unpleasant way of showing their gratitude; they raise their prices on every little trifle to deprive us of our pay at the earliest possible stage, and many of the French farmers must have made fortunes during the War! They get into a towering rage and gesticulate madly if we play football in their orchards, or otherwise encroach on their preserves. Well, maybe they *are* a bit sick after four years of English arrogance and self-assertiveness. . . .

To me there has always been a halo of glory and spirit emblazoned around the name of France; yet even I am bound to admit that my first impression of the French people has not been specially favourable, but I continually have to remind myself that there are two sides to every question. A little while ago some kids from the farmyard here had got hold of a young sparrow for a plaything; they had tied a string to one of its legs and kept swinging the poor little creature round and round in the air. I took it away from them—it nipped my finger hard by way of reward—and killed it right off; it was much too injured to live. In such moments one's pharisaical self is full of righteous glee at the thought of the immense superiority of the Nordic race to these degenerate Southern races; but the children howled and clamoured for their *maman*, telling her when she came about what this disgusting

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brute of a Canadian had done to their cherished toy!

This morning after lunch we—Jack, Chriss, Sam, Alec McLean and I—walked down to Lières to be photographed, and to-night we are going to celebrate our departure with a big farewell bout!

CAVRON ST. MARTIN,

June 12th.

The corporal school is deadly dull. It's just the Montreal and Bramshott routine over again, only still more so! I simply can't make it out; we don't learn anything about up-to-date trench-fighting, or at least very, very little. They have taught us a bit about German machine-guns and hand-grenades—"sticks," as they're called; that's interesting. But we have no night manœuvres; we have not seen a map, a compass, or a field-glass; we haven't heard a word about accounts and reports and all the many other things which an N.C.O. surely ought to understand. The same old sickening parade performance day after day, with this sole difference, that now it is *our* turn to stand in front of the other boys and shout: "Squ-a-a-d... *'Tion!* Pres-e-e-nt... *arms!* Ord-e-e-rr... *arms!*" Or we lie on the sides of a ditch and hear the sergeant telling us—for the twentieth time or more—about the way the various forces of wind influence the direction and aim of rifle bullets at such and such a distance. But it never occurs to them to teach us how to judge these distances and forces of wind.

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My mind keeps wandering while he lectures, and sometimes I even fall asleep in the midst of it all, but it doesn't matter much—our sergeant is such a good-natured, easy-going old fellow. It is only when our captain, "Old Hindenburg" as we have christened him, comes in sight that it is time to sit up and take notice.

We train from 8.30 a.m. till noon, and again from 2 p.m. till 3.30 p.m.—five hours in all—lectures and anecdotes included. There's no such thing as guard-duty and route marches in this place; how fat and flaccid I should get if I did not do some stiff marching on my own! On Wednesdays we even have the whole afternoon to ourselves. Is it really possible to take things as easy and superciliously as this—and yet win a World War?

They have chosen the most beautiful spot imaginable for our school—a wide, deep valley skirted by beechwoods, with farms spread alongside the small river. The gardens are full of roses, with poplars and elders. Our billets here, on the other hand, are very poor; they were better at St. Hilaire, not to mention our jolly dug-outs and cellars at the front. We sleep in an open barn, draughty and cold, and are so cramped for space that we have to lie almost on top of each other in the vermin-infested straw. And the Shylock who owns the farm charges one cent per man per night!

We know all about lice by this time, but they aren't nearly as bad as they are painted really,

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except when they take it into their heads to lodge somewhere in the small of your back or just under your belt, or in such other places where it is difficult to get at them. Every night we pull off our shirts and begin the slaughter of the inmates. We bag as many as fifty each drive—it's most entertaining. They leave our heads alone, though ; maybe there's no room for them to live in comfort there since we have shorn our pates as close as ever we could. We helped one another in turn to do this and it feels most pleasant and saves a lot of trouble.

But now the weather is fine and Jack and I are beginning to sleep out of doors, chaffed by the rest of the fellows. Isn't it strange that people can prefer a filthy, lousy barn floor to the fresh, green grass beneath the orchard trees, with a flock of young, inquisitive calves as interested onlookers ! I have reaped the long, soft grass and made a regular haystack out of it, and when I spread my great-coat on the top and wrap myself up in my rubber sheet an average shower now and again won't hurt me. The nightingale has stopped its singing now, but the cuckoo is indefatigable ; the first thing we hear at dawn and the last sound before we fall asleep at night is his " Cuck-oo—Cuck-oo ! " over and over again.

Last Sunday I had a wonderful experience.

Lying flat on my back in the orchard-grass and looking up to my old friends of the summer night—Deneb, Vega, Altair—I suddenly discovered a new, big star glittering quite close to Altair ! It couldn't be a planet—and it was no comet—and no war-

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light, no aeroplane signal—as it was stationary. Was the whole thing a dream or had I suddenly gone mad?

Jack was sleeping next to me—a few of the other boys have also joined us now—and I woke him to hear his opinion, but of course he didn't care a damn for those silly old stars.

Yesterday I succeeded in getting hold of a newspaper. I know now that it really *was* a "new star" I had seen; a collision between two solar bodies, or maybe a sudden flaring into life of an extinct sun, some billions of miles away in space, some thousand years ago! What a puny creature man is—what a puny thing even a World War is—when compared with the firmament and measureless infinity! . . . .

We have too much spare time here, not having our comrades to help us to while away the hours. Most of the boys do nothing beyond playing poker or "Crown and Anchor." Luckily, I have had a lot of good books sent me, so I'm all right: Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* arrived yesterday together with Wells' *Mr. Britling.* Most of our kind friends about the world seem to think that what we need out here in this blood-curdling hell of a place is the lightest style of book, genuine thrillers, something to make us forget our ghastly surroundings for one fleeting moment, perhaps. What we really do need are good books of outstanding merit, books to give us thoughts and ideas in our uneventful schoolboy's life.

Last Sunday I went down to Hesdin and bought

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some fishing-tackle in order to try my luck with the trout in the little river here; but though we were at least ten fishermen along the bank not one of us had as much as the slightest nibble—all the fish must have "gone west" long ago!

Hesdin is about three miles from here, and they give us leave to go down there almost as often as we apply for it—and when we do not get it, we go on our own! Not that the town is by any means especially alluring; it is as dirty and ugly as all the other small French towns I have seen, with dark and narrow streets and shutters in front of every window and heaps of small *estaminets* scattered all over the place. But the walk down there is very beautiful; it takes you through lovely beech woods, less cultivated than ours at home in Denmark and therefore more picturesque. It is rather fun sampling French cooking and drinking the excellent *vin blanc* in one of the small *estaminets;* and we are always dreaming of the sweet, pretty and kind-hearted French girl we three will meet one of these days—though I have had nothing but disappointment on this score so far! Perhaps they don't trouble themselves about a mere *poilu* like me. Next spring I want to be an officer! Besides, when Jack is about you have to keep to the paths of virtue. He is most faithful to his wife in every way.

When living in the trenches and amongst the ruined houses there, we take no interest in women and love beyond the usual jokes and funny stories—such is my impression, at any rate. We do not

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talk or think much about love-making. Life is so hard, and so full of exertion and intense excitement that all such thoughts and desires are quite imperceptibly put aside. But here, in these peaceful surroundings, with so much spare time on your hands, the old Adam of the flesh again comes to life. . . .

Most of my comrades here take every opportunity of this kind and rather make fun of those of us who are a bit more particular. Each Sunday afternoon, a long queue is formed in front of a certain house in Hesdin. One by one the soldiers are admitted, inflamed by the jokes and jests shouted out by the men behind them in the line, and each one is given ten minutes for the whole business.

Never in my life shall I wish for better friends and comrades than those I have met here—especially in my own battalion, the 42nd. There are very few exceptions. As I get to know them better, I feel more and more how much I like and admire them. Canada may well be proud of her sons overseas. Undaunted, with a joke or a grin to meet the worst trials and hardships, they are always ready to help each other in any and every way. They are wonderfully tactful and respectful, too, of each other's feelings: laughing, unfailing friends through thick and thin —"Gentlemen unafraid."

It has therefore surprised me to find that many of them—in the question of girls and love—so utterly abandon the gentlemanly idea of fair play. With the girls you may use any trick, however

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mean and shabby—the only thing is to get what you want from them and then beat it. They tell you proudly of how cunningly they managed to hide every trace of number and name from her when leaving, so that they themselves are quite on the safe side should some consequence or other ensue from their actions. Or they come home from leave and depict how they were strolling along the Strand without a penny in their pockets, when they fell in with a woman from the streets and were helped and assisted by her in every way; and how, when a couple of days afterwards, they had spent every bit of money she had, they left her with a curse. "Oh, hell, she was only a whore, anyway!"

But perhaps they are not very much to blame.... They have always had the same admonition, heard the same sermon from all authorities: every love affair, outside that of marriage, is in itself wicked and sinful; is, from the outset, bound to be nothing but obscene and filthy, regardless of how you feel and behave. Here, then, is one phase of life where honesty and deference and fair play are nothing but silly nonsense!

Well, I don't want to moralize to my friends—*chacun son goût.*

Only to me any love affair seems empty and joyless when you don't meet as equal partners in an honest and fair way—be it for a night or a year.

And then I am not thinking of the great possibility: you may meet the one and only woman....

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ST. HILAIRE,

June 24th.

We are back again in our old quarters! The battalion has been lying here ever since we left. There've been no new adventures, so we have not missed anything, fortunately.

Coming up here was rather a tough job, although the greater part of the distance was done by train; but even a six miles' march with 75 lbs. on your back is something after our long spell of easy days and lack of hard training. My pack was the heaviest of the whole lot I guess, for it was crammed with all the books I had had sent me from Denmark, Edinburgh, and New York; and as luck would have it, on the eve of our departure, a big hamper arrived, with lots of delicacies, sent by some of my ever-kind friends abroad. We did our best, every one of us, and made a clean sweep of the good grub before leaving Cavron St. Martin.

I don't think we have quite finished our training. "Old Hindenburg," at any rate, said something about "having us back again." We haven't got our N.C.O. papers either, but we are sure to get our first stripe after the next attack, when they'll be short of corporals!

Everything here at St. Hilaire seems just as we left it before going off to the N.C.O. School. Every morning, just as of old, we march down to the parade ground; and we still have to sleep in the lousy old barn. The wind is twirling the loose straw about in a sweeping whirligig during these

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last tempestuous days. Chriss and I have once more got a special treat from the farmer's wife: eggs and chips and *vin blanc*.

I am afraid it will be the last bottle of wine we shall consume for a long time. . . . We are going back to the trenches again, and have been busy all day getting ready for the tour. Where we are going, goodness only knows; there are rumours afloat that we are to be sent to Russia!

Jack and I are on guard-duty to-night. Loathsome as this job is, it has one advantage: we are almost driven to letter-writing during those four tedious hours in the guard-room, from 8 p.m. till midnight and again from 2 a.m. till 6 a.m. My unwritten letters have been weighing on my mind lately, and I fancy it has been the same with Jack, who is now sitting opposite me, the table piled high with his scribblings.

I am guarding the clink this time. Our prison is a stable, still more lousy than our barn, where some of our boys are paying for straying from the military path of virtue—Christensen amongst them. I spent my two hours' sentry-go sitting beside him in the straw, listening to his stories about his adventures; our discipline, as always, is nothing to worry about. He was caught after a couple of weeks of merry vagabondage and sentenced to three months' imprisonment—a most lenient judgment—so he considers, with a sarcastic grin!

Yesterday I went to church with McLean and the other R.C.'s. in the battalion—a little

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dark village church, smelling of incense and old wood.

Most of the boys here attend service on Sunday without much ardour. They grouse about the extra cleaning-up that is required for the church parade, and they doze away in the grass during the sermon. Nevertheless, they take it as a matter of course that one professes a religion of some sort, and they are ready to show toleration to the last degree and to let each man find his own way to heaven, but they are irritated if you refuse to subscribe to any kind of religious faith. You don't believe in a God?—what utter nonsense! There must be a God to keep order in the world and to reward or punish us after death, there's no question about that! Maybe the minister lays it on a bit too thick when he talks about hell, but all the same—you had better look out, old man, and go to church on Sunday. Safety first!

But to a few of my friends here religion means much more than that: their God is the focal point of their lives—and of course if they are right in their belief, there *is* nothing but God!

I have a discussion now and again with them and with the people in the Y.M.'s. (my English has improved a great deal lately), and they bring forth the usual little sordid, excogitated "proofs" of the existence of their God, trivial sophistry only. It is an entirely different kind of evidence which would influence me.

They are convinced, these men, that they are in close communion with God, with the infinite

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greatness. Through prayer and devotion they receive strength and virtue from Him, the only source of strength in the Universe. It is on this point that the evidence must be given, on this point must they prove their faith, or else fail. Is this the truth? I do not ask at all whether a man's religon is able to fill his life, to call forth his best efforts and qualities, for I know that religion can do this, though other things may work with the same effect: Love, science, art. But do we ever witness—in any shape or manner whatever—a flame of greatness blazing forth from these servants of God, showing something of the power they claim to have received, and making us, the unfortunate irreligious people, fall down overwhelmed, on our knees?

At home one is perhaps too careful and troubled about many things to get a clear understanding of what happens around one in this respect. I for one have never come across the least spark of divinity in anything I have met in life, or in what I have read about Jesus, Mohammed, or Joseph Smith. But perhaps it will be a different matter here at the front, where we face death more or less every day, and where life is simple and straightforward; for ever since I enlisted I have been ready to acknowledge anything which would appear to show the power and reality of religion.

I have watched the few really religious men here and tried to understand their thoughts and feelings, their character, their whole personality: they may receive supernatural strength from above, but they

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certainly never show any signs of it. They aren't in any way different from the rest of us, with the exception, perhaps, that they pay more heed to the Ten Commandments and the ancient traditions.

God may exist—we can't know anything about that. But all talk about any personal communion with Him sounds to me like self-delusion or arrogance.

In the afternoon we went to a big gymkhana at Linghem, a village three or four miles N.W. of us. There were at least ten thousand soldiers packed together on the top of the hill, where we found all sorts of fun and strange sights: clowns, fat women and cannibals (soldiers all of them, of course)—in addition to football matches, races, and so on. We met hundreds of Chinese coolies there, who are now to be found everywhere along the front, as they are digging trenches to be used after the next German push; the fellows produced a sort of play which made even themselves double up with laughter, although the show seemed quite meaningless to us.

There was a fight going on somewhere towards the N.E.—on the Kemmel hill, I believe. The steady boom of the guns could be heard whilst the small white clouds of exploding shells were to be seen above the crest of our hill here . . . but we had no time to look that way; it was ever so much more fun watching the tug-of-war between the various battalions.

Quite a lot of U.S. troop-transports must have

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come over by now, for we are constantly seeing American soldiers about the place. Excellent equipment their's, only too much of it, in my opinion. Too many luxuries, too, as, for instance, a second pair of boots. I know more about the Americans now than I did last year in May, when landing in New York, and I shudder when I call to mind that it was only a happy accident which sent me to Canada, otherwise I might by now have been a private in the U.S.A. Army. . . .

On my way back from Hesdin the other day I met a young U.S. soldier and we fell to talking together. He had only just arrived in France, was alert and intelligent as they always are these Yankees, and full of interest in his new surroundings. Among other things, he told me of an event he had recently witnessed. Together with some other Americans, he had been on escort-duty marching a batch of prisoners to the station, and on their way they passed the Chinese coolies' camp. On the previous night, some German planes had dropped a couple of bombs down into the Chinese camp, hitting some of them and making the rest mad and livid with terror and rage. They saw the transport passing, and deemed it a fit opportunity for revenge; like a swarm of angry wasps, they came buzzing out of their tents on to the road. "We weren't half sorry to watch their antics," said the young American. "It was great fun to step aside and see what they'd do to the damned Huns. Oh boy! you ought to have seen one of these Chinks jump on top of such a fat

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old Boche, put his long knife right through the man's belly, and then kick his backside when he rolled to the ground! Serves 'em jolly well right, the bastards!"

I answered never a word, just turned my back on him and went my way, indignant at the thought of such fellows being permitted to decide the fate of Europe. . . . Our brethren-in-arms—good Lord! Well, after all, perhaps he was just bragging and laying it on thick to impress me, for it seems incredible that any white man could treat a defenceless prisoner like that! . . .

Mean, disgraceful conduct? But if ever I come home again and depict to the peaceful Copenhagen pharisees, without any regret, how I felt nothing but satisfaction and pride when I had been lucky enough to make a good hit at a German—will they not be fully justified if they feel exactly the same disgust and contempt for such moral baseness? This self-righteous indignation is always the first feeling we experience when we come across an unfamiliar way of acting or thinking. We have all grown up in the firm belief that our own ethical code is the only correct one (whether we conform to it or not)—and it is hard to realize clearly that there is no more any absolute up and down in the spiritual than in the physical world. You may take a dislike to a man who ill-treats animals or sneers at authority, who utters false notes or paints futuristic pictures—but don't forget that your whole indignation is only due to your in-

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dividual taste and tendencies disagreeing with those of the other man.

It may be very nice and comforting to make yourself believe that you have the support of the whole Universe behind you, if you fight for justice and humanity. Now and again I have myself found it difficult not to look for a shabby, outside justification, to take refuge in the claim that I am fighting for civilization and the United States of Europe. But out here, in No Man's Land, a man ought to be able to shake off all such illusions and take courage to be himself and to stand by his own convictions.

It was not those lofty ideals which sent me out here. I fight because I love adventure, danger and great deeds. I had the choice between the little, colourless existence at home in Copenhagen, or life's great adventure here, fighting shoulder to shoulder with the strong youth of all the world.

Cast a look over France to-day!

Again and again the German storm-troops come rushing forward—the last reserves now, young lads just out of school. The bulk of them will find their graves in these French river-valleys, and yet they come marching along, in close formation, straight against the machine-guns—as steadfastly as the German armies that stormed Liege in August 1914. All the iron energy of their race is behind them: *Es braust ein Ruf mit Donnerhall!* . . .

Against them stand the French *poilus*, battered and scarred from four years of uninterrupted

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warfare, but unbroken and steeled beneath the smashing blows of the German fist. Their ranks are thinned but they are as unbroken as ever; their determination to hold out to the day of victory is as inflexible as it has been all through: *Ils ne passeront pas!*

What, then, does it matter to any of us if the War may be termed meaningless and absurd? How can we know whether life altogether has any ultimate meaning? Life in itself is the only meaning and aim of life, and though war brings death and devastation in its wake, yet nothing in the world can blow our lives into such white-hot flames and create in us such great passions: Love, hatred, enthusiasm, courage and self-sacrifice, suffering and grief. These four red years have taught us what it is to live. . . .

To-morrow we shall be back on the road—marching with swinging kilts behind our beloved, wailing bagpipes . . . eastwards again.

THE FRONT, SOUTH OF ARRAS,
July 5th.

Here in the trenches it is hot enough to singe the hair off your skin. The sun burns directly over our heads, and there is not a breath of air. The sky looks hard and dark blue right down to the very horizon; the trenches are dry and cracking—the ground is all clay—and there is not a scrap of shade anywhere. We take off our

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kilts—keeping on our aprons in case of emergency —and try to arrange some kind of shelter for our poor heads by means of a couple of wire posts over which we stretch our kilts. We are of course delighted at having fine weather, especially after the gales of last week; and it is only just now, at noontide, that the heat really worries us.

The coming down here from St. Hilaire wasn't very pleasant, heavily loaded as we were. First, there was the evening march north, as far as Aire. Were we going to Flanders, we wondered! Next, a long night in a railway truck, literally packed in layers, until at length—towards morning—we reached a small country station. I could just spell out its name in the dark: Aubigny. From here we marched southwards, slowly and laboriously, whilst the sun rose and warmed our sore limbs and aching shoulders. When, during a halt at Lattre St. Quintin, I got out my map to get my bearings, I discovered—much to my surprise—that we had come to a place somewhere west of Arras. Two days' marching (a good walker could have covered the distance, including the railway journey, within one day) and we were in the trenches again.

I have lately been bothered with abscesses at the back of my neck. It's most annoying on a long day's march in full kit; and now the swelling has spread right down to my shoulders. Many of the boys are suffering from the same thing, and it is a sorry sight to see us line up at sick parade each morning! Some say it's the bad water we drink

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during these hot days, others blame the lice, whilst others again put it down to the everlasting tinned food. Apart from this, however, we are keeping most wonderfully fit here at the front. Town-bred people straight from the close air of city offices, who used to get pneumonia after being out in a shower, thrive here on snatches of sleep, standing about in soaking clothes in mud-holes. Men, too, who used to suffer most terribly from rheumatism after a foot-wetting, may here be seen walking about in slush halfway up to their knees for weeks on end—and it has killed the rheumatism, they say! I myself, who used to go about with an everlasting cold at home, haven't sneezed once since coming to the front! So really we ought not to worry too much about the boils. But after having squeezed and pinched the beast every morning for a week, in order to get the pus out of it, the doctor at last lost patience. . . . I was told to lie down flat on my tummy, a man holding me whilst the doctor took out a pair of curved scissors and cut away as much of the festering skin as he thought fit. That did it!

This part of the front where we are now must be one of the specially peaceful ones, there having been no fighting here for ever so long. Besides, we are not even in the firing-trench, so we have next to nothing to do, beyond a bit of wire repairing now and then, an hour's gas-guard at night—quite a pleasure during these warm, light summer nights.

There are some old, tumble-down and evil-

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smelling dug-outs about the place, made no doubt by the Germans when they occupied the district; but—praise be to the Lord for the laziness of the happy-go-lucky Britishers!—we leave them to collapse and keep to the surface. All along the line are numbers of small caves dug into the trench-wall ("vi-vis," as they call them, whatever that may mean!), with roofs of corrugated-iron. They are not over-large, but nevertheless fine and cosy. Two men share one of these holes; McLean and I are together, and we have been lucky and secured one of the best. Grass and sandbags cover our floor, shelves for books and sundries adorn our walls, and we've got a fine little fireplace fitted up close to the entrance where we prepare and serve beans and bully-beef and toast to our visitors in the evenings. We have great times here!

At 8 a.m. they bring us bacon and tea, and sometimes a delicious spoonful of porridge! Of course it is easier letting one man carry it round through the trench, than have the whole company coming up to the cook-house one by one. When we have breakfasted, we take another little nap before crawling out of our caves at about 10 a.m. to clean our rifles and—at spasmodic intervals—ourselves, too. Dinner is doled out at 1 p.m. and supper at 6 p.m. To-day we had stewed rabbit for dinner, a welcome change from the everlasting mulligan.

By noon our "vi-vis" are like ovens, of course, but the evenings are very fresh and cool. Every day when dusk sets in, we may be seen roving all

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over the place to find some pieces of old and rotten wood or boards, which we splinter with our trench spade and use as fuel for our stoves—tiny bits at a time, otherwise there'll be too many sparks shooting up our chimney! Shortly after, our visitors, Jack, Sam and Chriss, and sometimes a few others as well, arrive; we squeeze together as closely as ever we can, our hands clasped round our knees: we toast bread, drink tea and cocoa and tell stories. McLean is an old soldier, who went through the whole of the Boer War, and he can tell no end of interesting yarns. Chriss, confirmed optimist as he is, has made a bet with the rest of the section there will be peace before Christmas! Well, that remains to be seen. My personal aspirations include a short course of a couple of winter months at an officers' training school in England—and a new, glorious spring out here in France as a lieutenant!

When midnight comes round, Mac and I turn out the whole batch of visitors and settle down for the night; but just as I am slipping blithely away towards the land of Nod, someone rudely pulls at my feet: "Tom, you are next for gas-guard!" . . .

Ruined towns like Lens and Liévin are indescribably dismal and dreary; but out here there are no such depressing sights, only big open stretches of grassland. We have to stick to the security of the trenches right through the daytime of course, but there is no danger in getting up on the steps along the parapet to have a look out.

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ENGLISH TANK AND GERMAN PRISONERS

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As far as you can see towards east and south, there's nothing but bare, dead stretches of grey waste; the dazzling sunlight makes the whole place look still more lifeless. No traces of pre-War life can be seen; and whatever has been here of old trenches, wire belts, and shell-holes—all have now been covered over with a waving carpet of tall grey grass.

Our heavy guns, far behind the lines, are sending a missile over our heads now and then. We hear the shell high in the air, as it presses onwards, and sometimes we may see the white dust-cloud raised by its impact with earth somewhere in the German front. Sometimes Fritz replies; a geyser of earth and stones rises straight into the air, whilst a big, blue-grey, poisonous cloud drifts along some hundred yards away. The ordinary shells don't bother us: experience has taught us that it takes ever so many shells to hit a man—and besides we can do nothing to protect ourselves against them even if they do come. But when a gas-shell comes whizzing with a queer sound of its own, and explodes with a whoop, you may see a couple of the boys crawl out of their holes and look out to make sure whether the faint N.W. breeze will blow the gasses down towards us.

There is a faint singing sound from the blue sky overhead—the airmen are making use of the fine weather to take their observations and photos. We hear them, although we may not be able to see them at all, for they are immensely high up, 18,000 feet, perhaps. Only when one of the

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machines turns round up there we may catch a glimpse of something white and infinitely small, a tiny dot against the blue sky. Should the 'planes descend lower, the aircraft guns at once begin to growl like angry dogs, strewing the air all round with small puff-clouds of bursting shells. This probably distracts the aeroplanes to a certain extent and compels them to rise again to safer altitudes, but the guns never seem to do any real harm to those dainty white crosses up there. I have seen more than ten thousand shells burst in the air without hitting any of the 'planes.

Behind us is our line of observation-balloons, looking for all the world like a row of buoys marking the approach to a harbour. Those nearest bulk like gigantic globes obscuring our view, whilst afar way towards north and south-west, they are nothing but small round specks on the horizon.

Last night when I was on gas-guard for two hours instead of one (because Mac was seedy and stayed at home) the airmen were out. Right above my head they were, flying quite low, although I could not see them. The English motors work with a steady, unbroken, monotonous *whirr* all the time; the Germans are more irregular, the sound rising and falling. That's how we can distinguish them from each other and know whether we can expect a bomb or not. I sat on a small knoll just above the trenches, the highest point in the whole landscape. . . . Capella stood quite low in the

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north, and Cassiopeia was on her way up the sky towards N.E. The night was almost as light as one of our Danish midsummer nights.

My duty being over, I sat for some long time before our small fire, right till the dawn began to creep over the hills—exactly as I used to sit in front of the drawing-room hearth at home. But then it was because I felt dispirited, sick of it all, without any faith in my own strength or visions of coming years. Now, I am sitting here perfectly happy. . . .

THE HOSPITAL BARRACKS, BAILLEULVAL,
July 17th.

This rotten 'flu wears you out ever so much more than is fair. Your temperature is normal again and you feel really quite O.K.—till you begin to use your strength for anything harder than reclining in a deck-chair. Then you're done for on the spot! All I have done by way of exertion is to crawl up to an old ruined church beside the high-road, and yet I am dripping with the perspiration of utter fatigue. Never mind, weather permitting, I am going to spend the whole afternoon up here, lying amongst the ivy-covered *débris*, reading Wells' *Passionate Friends*, with no guard-duty or parades to worry about.

Mac was first to catch it, up in the trenches, but they didn't realize then what it meant; they thought it was just a usual cold, and so he was permitted to stay in our "vi-vis" to recover.

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I was the next to get it, as well as a lot of the other boys, almost at the same time. We got orders to march back as far as the hospital at Rivière to be properly seen to there. Most of us fell out on the way and had to lie down in the roadside ditches until further notice, I amongst them—all the world seemed to me like one big spinning catherine-wheel. Luckily, an empty Staff-car happened to come by, and the lot of us were taken on board and conveyed to our destination, two or three miles further on.

The hospital was an old cart-shed fitted up with two tiers of wire-bunks, and the treatment consisted of a pill before breakfast; and evidently that was all that we needed, for we picked up fine all of us. Close to the shed was a garden with soft, dense grass beneath some old apple trees; here we were placed from an early morning hour, and allowed to spend the day philosophizing in the grass beneath the apple trees.

We are still convalescents—doing nothing all day long but hunting lice, whilst the 42nd is in the trenches. There is a short parade every morning; they want to see whether all of us are still alive and not too dirty and unshaven; after that we are left to our own devices.

Last Sunday we moved over here from Rivière; the distance is only two or three miles, and we were brought over in big motor ambulances. The authorities have evidently realized that this "Spanish 'flu" is not to be trifled with. And we even had a bath yesterday—just when we were

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thinking seriously of suspending hostilities against the lice in the straw here; but a hot bath with plenty of soap and a disinfected shirt will help for a day or two.

We live in big corrugated-iron huts here with eighteen or twenty men in each. Christensen is here because he is given a holiday from Clink while he is ill. Chriss, too, has arrived from the front, so now we are a small Danish community. Chriss is busily planning the details of a tour he and I are to carry out after the War is over; going round Denmark with a small show of our own—a model trench, a machine-gun, a gas-mask, and all the rest of the paraphernalia, and giving lectures about our life out here. "Dare say they'd let us have an old howitzer cheap—bet you anything we'll have some success!"

Harvest time is near in these parts, the fields immediately behind the front abound with a splendid crop of rye and wheat. Chriss and I walk round, looking at all these bounties, admiring the French people for their stolid endurance—I only wish they had their harvest safely home!

Things have been quiet hereabouts for some time now, but I hear they are taking it up again south of us. Should the Germans break through there and reach the coast, it will mean that our position here will collapse at the same time, and we will have to hurry back to England—if we get the chance! The whole of the north of France will be lost and the War will go on for ever. . . .

Another beastly shower coming along!

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St. Fuscien,
August 3rd.

I wish I were an officer and could get a chance to follow events! A private soldier is moved about like a tethered cow. One thing, however, is certain: there is a big attack being prepared, but when is it coming off—and where—and how? The Canadians, the Colonial contingents altogether, are generally placed right to the fore whenever something desperate has to be carried through. We appear to be brought south now—seem to be massed together for some big, smashing, final blow. . . . I do wish we knew more about it!

Fortunately I have my map, and it enables us to follow our progress from one town and village to the next. Going about a country without knowing where, and in what direction, would make me absolutely dizzy. But most of the other boys don't care a damn whether we are going north or south, advancing or remaining in the same place; and as a matter of fact, many of our officers seem to be just as ignorant and indifferent!

Our officers are kind and considerate, ever ready to lend a helping hand, always easy to get along with. They are brave, too—almost to the very limit of foolhardiness; enduring and persevering to the utmost verge of human possibility: gentlemen in the very best sense of the word. All the same, I cannot help wishing that, besides these fine virtues, there might have been some small amount of ability, of trained skill and responsibility.

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They are just like big children, these young lieutenants and captains, too—with no thought in their heads beyond the present day. I shall never forget when marching into Lièvin on that first night, meeting a number of young officers coming towards us at a brisk trot, eager and perspiring, with long poles in their hands. We gripped our rifles tight and stared hard, in quick suspense, ready for all emergencies . . . here, no doubt, we had at last got to the very centre of action. . . . But they were having a regatta with empty bottles down the Souchez river!

We of the rank and file are children, too, but then that is quite a different matter; we are almost *expected* to be thoughtless and careless. But is it really possible to pass through an officers' training school and get a commission without knowing "the rule of three," or how to read a map or speak a little French? The English soldier material is all right, there is nothing better in the world; if our officers had had some of the efficiency and experience of the French and German leaders, the victory would have been ours long ago! Probably the worst deficiencies are to be found with the Staff officers, only it is of course hard for a mere private to say. Be as it may: the British have a singular, almost mysterious power of "muddling through" always; without foresight, plan or management; by sheer inherent strength of character alone.

Captain Grafftey is a brilliant exception to the general rule—a thoroughly able, clever and smart

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officer, for whose sake we would all go through fire and water. But even he, who has been in France for a couple of years now, has to call for assistance (even from a poor private like me) when asking a French peasant the way.

I am glad we recovered from our attack of 'flu and got back to our battalion in time for the coming events. We at the Bailleulval hospital were all let out on the 25th July, and marched off happily to join our battalion at Headquarters near Warlus, west of Arras, a jolly little camp with corrugated-iron huts. Next morning we had to be out in the rain all ready at 2 a.m., to receive our comrades returning from the trenches (the weather has been wretched lately whilst we were hanging about in hospital), but full of stories of raids and other stirring events. Jack has been out on two different raids, he tells me; the first was interrupted at the very beginning by one of the party shooting a pal by mistake; but the next raid was a fine one, with hard fighting in the German trenches, where —so Jack says—they killed ten Germans and came off with only one single casualty themselves!

Poor old Sherwood has been badly gassed and sent to hospital, otherwise the boys were all hale and hearty and glad to see us back.

We had a few wearisome days up there, with trench-digging and guard-duty. There was a whole new trench system marked off across the hills of Dainville (new front line west of Arras? not especially encouraging!), and we worked like niggers in company with a gang of Chinese coolies,

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prodding and thumping the hard limestone. Funny that such a small attack of 'flu can make itself felt for so long after; we convalescent men were unable to do half the work required of us and we gasped like anything after digging for an hour only. After all, we weren't so very ill.

Parades and squad-drills, till we were sick of it, and half the off-time used for polishing green buttons and bits of brass till they outshone the sun! The dullest of all a soldier's duties. . . .

On the 30th, we marched off again, in full kit this time. With all our sticks on our backs, we marched more than fifteen miles on a sweltering hot day, *via* Gouy (Chriss and I waved to the nice Belgian girls who gave us eggs and chips there the other day), and further through Saulty to Ivergny. We had our dinner on the road, from the kitchen waggons, and our usual ten minutes' rest after each hour's marching. Nevertheless, I was on the verge of collapse when we reached Ivergny; tired out—for the first time during my soldiering life.

The next morning we marched to the railway at Bouquemaison station and crawled up into the trucks ready for us. Were we going to the mud-fields of Flanders at last? No, our engine tacked itself on to the opposite end of the train—we were going southwards. We snailed along as far as Amiens—which appears to have survived fairly unscathed through the fighting here last spring—and finally got down a little to the south of the town, in the small village of Saleux.

The whole of this part of the line has, they say,

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up till now been held by the French Colonial troops. The billets are too filthy for words! We Canadians always, as a matter of course, tidy things up a bit when we leave a village. . . . The first night we were billeted in a tall house in the village of Dury, and Chriss and I, who were among the first to get in, examined the whole place from cellar to attic to find a decent spot to sleep in, but every room was heaped with muck and refuse and stank like a dunghill. At last we elected to sleep in a corner of the yard. Of course, we were surprised before sunrise by a sudden, violent shower, and had to collect all our goods and seek shelter inside after all—jammed in under the legs of the other fellows.

Whenever we have had a tiring march in the evening, we are allowed to sleep till quite a late hour the next day: it may be round about eight or nine o'clock before we are roused by the sound of the réveillé. Then good old Chriss, who is always kindness itself, gets into his clothes and shuffles along to the cook-house after our tea and bacon. There are no drills at present, just the usual morning parade, for the inspection of our rifles and ourselves, too. Yesterday morning we'd hardly lined up before the rain came down in buckets; then Captain Grafftey ordered us all indoors at once, and by way of passing the time in a useful and dignified manner, he suggested that I should tell them all something about Denmark, and how we Danes looked upon the War. Luckily, I am getting on much better with my

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English now, so for about twenty minutes or so I bragged about Scandinavia as the hub of the entire Universe!

The afternoons are generally devoted to poker. It is amazing to me how some of the men will go on hoping for the four aces day after day, as long as there's a *sou* left of their meagre half-month's pay. Chriss and I, however, got tired of the game yesterday and walked down to Saleuz where we found a small and dirty *estaminet* and some French and Australian soldiers who also liked the *vin blanc*. We had just got safely back to Dury, installed in our corner of the wet yard, when we were all roused by the bugles calling us out to parade, to march on to St. Fuscien. Arrived at our new billets after a march of three or four endless miles, I just tumbled down into the cellar and slept heavenly, rolled in my overcoat and rubber sheet, but the rest of the section fled upstairs. This morning, when I awoke, I understood at once the reason why—the cellar was more dirty than any of our former quarters, the walls were black with swarms of flies, millions there were, buzzing like a real witches' cauldron if I made the slightest movement. I beat a disgusted retreat and found my comrades snugly installed in the loft above where there's plenty of room and fresh air. To-night we are all sitting here together in the straw, smoking and chatting, care-free and happy.

Our Colonel, McLennan, was killed this morning when inspecting the new position; a stray piece of shell struck him. Poor man; it was hard lines

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for him to die just when he was to have the privilege of leading the 42nd into battle! I suppose we ought to feel duly depressed and downhearted at our loss—but then we hardly knew him. I guess we shall soon have cause for more personal regrets. Wilson was wounded the other day, but we hope it's only a month's "Blighty" for him.

They say that horses and dogs can feel a coming earthquake some time beforehand whilst everything is yet quiet. We here are now sitting on our straw beds, feeling the earthquake advancing towards us. One's whole existence seems to expand, to become greater and richer. . . . I have now only one wish in the whole world: that when I am tested I may bear myself well.

All being well, our friends at home will soon be hearing news from France!

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THE PLAIN NEAR MÉZIÈRES,
August 9th.

At last, on Tuesday the 6th, it began.

We had had several unpleasant days; cold, rainy and windy; but in the afternoon, after the last parade and inspection, it cleared up, the sun came out, and the night was silent and starlit. At 9 p.m. we marched off eastwards from St. Fuscien in battle order along the muddy roads. Every little village yielded its contingent; troops of all kinds met and swelled at last into one mighty stream, like a mountain torrent after rain. Guns, cavalry and tanks having first right, we poor foot-soldiers tumbling forward in the ditches.

Constantly the march was checked, the road being blocked somewhere in front, and we halted —disgusted and cursing; a real rest now and again is a blessing from heaven, but to come to a standstill and have to wait for a couple of minutes every hundred steps is intolerable.

The searchlights swung their broad white wings round the horizon, to meet, eighteen or twenty of them, at one point up at zenith, only to part again to sweep the sky separately. Was it in order to prevent the German 'planes from noticing our movements, of getting any suspicions of our designs? It seemed to me that Fritz would only have needed to glance at the sky in order to realize that we were up to something big.

It was 3 a.m. when we came to Gentelles Wood —the whole distance we had marched was only

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about seven or eight miles—where we got a splendid sleep in the soft grass until eight o'clock.

The forest was torn and shattered by the shells, a wilderness of snapped trunks and smashed branches, but all the same, it gave us plenty of cover, the German pilots would never suspect that the whole place was alive like an ant-hill. They dropped a couple of bombs during the day to keep us awake, but we didn't mind and nobody was hurt.

All day long we rested in this pleasant spot—we even had permission to make a little fire here and there under a thickly branched tree and do a bit of cooking. The regular meals are good and plentiful, of course, but we never miss a chance of eating unlimited quantities of extra food. The last tin of baked beans was opened—there's no reason to go into battle with a haversack heavier than absolutely necessary! We washed and shaved carefully in order to look our best before Fritz; we always carry our shaving kit with us, of course, even when we have to leave behind nearly all the rest of our equipment. . . .

I had again got a couple of nasty boils at the back of my neck; they were cut and squeezed by the doctor, and I was duly provided with a long bandage for my neck. Such a dressing becomes like a tarred rope after a few days in the trenches; it is really a wonder that one doesn't get blood-poisoning—but that may come yet.

Our equipment was inspected for the last time: Gas-masks, rifles, ammunition, shaving kit, iron

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rations—everything was O.K. Some of us were presented with an extra gift—mine was a big and heavy bag containing a dozen or so Mills' bombs!

Just before sunset we had to fall in for the final parade. Then supper—and at 10 p.m. we were again fighting our way through the throng on the Amiens-Roye road.

The many shell-holes in the road had been very well repaired, but the crush was even worse than the night before: the road was one rolling mass of tanks, guns and cavalry. No passage was possible through the shattered wood in the dark, so we had to force our way forward, step by step, in the ditches and on the slopes of the road. The damned bombs I was carrying cut my sore shoulder abominably; five or six of them, however, were quietly dropped into a hole in the ditch, greatly relieving the strain:

About midnight we came to the end of the forest and the advance became much easier. Shortly afterwards we left the road, jumping down into a new, narrow trench and groped our way along further south for some minutes. At last we came to a halt—the whole battalion stood there, closely packed into the deep, narrow trench, waiting in the dark. Strict orders had been passed to avoid all noise—even in the muddle on the road we had restricted our swearing to the barest necessary; and here, where we stood now, hardly a sound was to be heard.

A calm clear night, with shooting stars, and with the valley in front of us filled with heavy white

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fog. On the eastern bank of the valley we could just make out the ridges, where the German lines were. . . .

Were we afraid? Many of us would not live to see the next sunset. . . . Had the fear of death taken hold of us during those dark, still hours? I tried to watch the boys around me, who whispered a few remarks to each other, laughing quietly. Oh, no, they were neither downhearted nor afraid!

What is it that gives them their courage? Is it their religious faith, their trust in God's Will and Providence, their belief in a life after death? I myself do not believe in or take count of another life after this, and death has therefore no fear or hope for me; but nearly all of the others believe certainly in eternal life—many of them even feel sure that he who gives up his life on the battle-field will be admitted at once into paradise. Or is it the confidence they have in their righteous cause, their love for their country, their hatred of the Huns? I don't think so.

Such acquired dogmas and theoretical reflections may certainly help people to do their duty, to go voluntarily to their death if need be, but they do not free them from fear.

But for hundreds of years the spirit of the British race has striven towards one ideal, has valued one thing above everything else in the world: to be men—strong, inflexible, fearless. They have reached their goal: the old curse, the dread of death, has been defeated; they have learned to meet suffering and death with open,

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steady eyes—and they have gained the mastery of the world.

We stood leaning against the trench-side and dozing a bit when Lieutenant Scott turned up, asking me to accompany him out on patrol. He wanted to go forward and make sure about our route in the morning, to find a bridge we had to cross. We went down the long slope towards south-east, diving into the mist near a half-ruined village (Domart), and found the bridge, a narrow passage of planks, stretched across a small river (Luce), and the swampy meadows on both sides. The bridge had been made during the night by the French engineers (we are on the extreme right wing of the British Army, and have French troops close-by on our right), and a couple of French guides—the first French soldiers I have met at the front—were still standing here to direct us and explain matters to us. We noted the surroundings and took our bearings: a big broken poplar trunk to the right, a couple of large shell-holes in the hillside, the remnant of a gable somewhat to the north. Then we hurried back to be home before the zero hour.

The clear sky in the north-east was already reddening when we walked back, up the hillside through the dewy grass to the trench: only once shall we live to see such a morning. . . .

The broad river-valley under us was still and quiet, filled with peace in the dim dawn; the long grey grass covering the scars of war. The country-

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side here was not yet utterly destroyed—the tops of the poplars showed along the rivulet, and bits of woods could be seen here and there on the hill-tops. Far away, up in the feathery clouds, which now stood out clearly in the red sky, the engine of a lonely aeroplane on its morning inspection could be heard—a faint buzz, rising and falling; now and again came the boom, soft and distant, of a heavy gun, firing somewhere up near Albert. The eastern horizon, the ridges behind the German line, were sharply outlined against the sky . . . the bottom of the valley was a white lake of mist . . . a warm smiling summer morning. . . .

But we are standing in the trench, counting the seconds on my watch. My hand is quivering a little. . . .

Like a steel spring bent to breaking-point lie two hundred thousand men, crouching here and on the hills northwards, the *élite* of the British Army, breathlessly awaiting the signal for the charge. Two thousand guns are massed together close behind the infantry lines; tanks, cavalry, aeroplanes . . . the British lion itself, crouching, without a sound, every quivering nerve and sinew ready for the spring.

Now!!

The whole of the western horizon bursts into flame as if the earth had opened. Thousands of guns are roaring at once; the shells howl and hiss right over our heads, and our knees give way under us . . . every sense is drowned in the paralysing roar of those first minutes.

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Our first three companies have already started rushing down the hillside. We of Don Company are kept in reserve to-day and have been told to wait for ten minutes in the trench, but now it is our turn. . . . Scott waves his hand to us, yelling out an inaudible order—Jack tries to shout something straight into my ear but I can't make out one word. Now we are off at a steady trot down the slope. There we have the bridge, easy enough to find—one by one we pick our way carefully along the tilting planks—but the mist is dense as milk here, and I can't see anything except the shadow of the man in front and the planks at my feet. . . . Why the hell can't they hurry up there in front?

Our own bombardment from behind has slackened a little, but now the German artillery is opening up. Whizz—Bang! Bang! Bang! suddenly bursts out everywhere around us. Aha, it seems that we have got Fritz awake at last! They heap shells down upon us, they know the fords across the river, the devils. But here is the end of the bridge, thank God; then forward through the swampy, flooded meadow, up to our knees in water—quite slowly, the white mist hiding everything. Explosions thunder and crash right and left, shrapnel-bullets and bits of shell splash down into the water around us, and the air burns from the pungent smell of the explosives.

"Gas! Gas!"—the howl is repeated from man to man along the line. Oh, damn it all! On with the mask then. I jerk it out from its bag, gripping

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my rifle between my knees and knocking my tin hat off—the rubber band around the head, the mouthpiece between the teeth, there now!—The masks ought to be safe, anyhow, we examined them only yesterday night and greased the eye-glasses.

But it is intolerable struggling through the mud with these damned things on. . . . I am gasping for breath, fighting to get a little bit of fresh air through the narrow tube . . . the eye-glasses get dim in spite of the grease, and I can't see anything. The sweat is pouring down my body and I am half choked.

Ah, at last the solid earth again: we are past the meadows now! A few last steps up the slope, worn out and dizzy, the blood thumping in my head—and I am above the fog and the gas. I tear off the mask and collapse into a shell-hole, panting like a dog. Jack is lying close to me on my right, gasping for breath; the others are stumbling up the hill—some of them still with the masks on, unrecognisable. There's Sam and Lieutenant Scott . . . and over there is Christensen with his legs all smashed to pieces by a shell!

We can't stop here, the shelling is too bad. A shower of steel and stones crash down upon us as we reach the first German trench and fall headlong down into it. No Germans here—alive; our guns have done their work well; the trench has been turned upside-down, and our first line has already passed over it. A rather unpleasant sight.

Now the shelling has abated a bit just around

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here. Now further forward, through the trench, across the road and into a small wood on the other side. Here many wounded are lying and fresh ones are constantly being brought in. Here come two men, carrying Christensen — he who has carried in so many wounded: now it is his turn to rest on the stretcher, on his own stretcher. He is unconscious, his legs are one bloody mess; he is done for.

The first German prisoners are now arriving, walking in twos and threes together through the wood, without any escort; disarmed, uncertain, and nervous. They are all dirty and torn, a couple of them are slightly wounded; one of them is limping, another has buttoned his big grey coat over his bloody sleeve. The majority have large round helmets—some few wear only little flat caps. We pretend to charge them, with threatening looks and bayonets. . . . "*Ach, Kamerad! Kamerad!*" Their hands shoot up over their heads, one of them drops down on his knees. Poor chaps, the only survivors from the hell-fire of the morning! We laugh at them and give them a cigarette and a drink of water, and they pass along. They are going to dreary, degrading captivity, but nevertheless, with a heavy load lifted off their shoulders.

But now they rally us along the edge of the wood, behind a big dike. In front of us, up the long slope to the east, a furious battle is raging. Our first-line is attacking for all they are worth, they are already halfway up the hill. They rush forward by sections, flinging themselves down to fire a

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volley and jumping up again (just as we were taught in the "Akademiske Skyttekorps" and ought to have practised at Bramshott). The enemy is not to be seen; he is hiding himself in a thicket on the top of the hill, but his machine-guns are sweeping the slope with a torrent of lead, and the advancing sections are thinned. . . . The German shells drop densely out there, the rushes become shorter and shorter, one or two men are left on the ground every time a squad jumps up and leaps forward a few steps. Impossible to break through!

But here we have the tanks! The clumsy monsters lumber awkwardly forward up the steep slope, across trenches and shell-holes, fire flashing from them, whilst the German rifle-bullets and shrapnel fragments hammer in vain against their sides. Good old tanks! The boys up there jump up and force themselves forward against the storm of fire, between the tanks, and behind them. A last mad rush . . . the hill-top is one roaring flame and they disappear over the skyline. They have reached their goal . . . the fire dies down. . . . The German line is taken. . . .

A little later we followed across the hills. The shrapnel was still bursting on all sides. Whizz-Bang!! A wicked black cloud broke forth in the air above us, and the bullets rattled like a heavy rain into the grass round about. But we were now drunk with victory and the defence had lost its strength. We held our breath, looking straight

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in front, while the shells thundered overhead, and with hardly any losses we got across the open hill and down a wood-clad cleft on the other side. Here the battalion had two hours' rest and we made tea.

The narrow cleft gave us excellent cover for its bottom and sides were full of hollows and caves, which were filled with the German reserve ammunition. But on the hills behind us, the enemy shells were still throwing up fans of earth and smoke—big shells now, evidently. Just on the crest above us lay a wounded soldier, probably hit in the head. He was trying to get up all the time, supporting himself on his rifle: he would take one step and then fall down headlong, rising painfully, only to fall again, again and again. Many of us would gladly have run the risk to go up there and try to carry him down, but we could not get permission. At last, the shelling stopped and the stretcher-bearers started out to fetch him and a great many more. The bottom of our cleft was covered with wounded men, both Canadians and Germans. On stretchers and blankets and on the bare ground they lay—silent, grey faces. . . . The blood was already brown on many of them.

But my company was spared yesterday; we didn't get any real fighting at all.

After the rest, the turn had come to us. Now we had come to take "Hill 108." We left the safe cleft, climbing in a long line up the steep, slippery, grassy slopes towards the east. Just behind the crest, we came to the German trenches; long,

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brown mounds showing through the grey grass. Bent double, with throbbing hearts and finger on trigger, we sneaked forward—but not one shot was fired at us as we wriggled through the wire belt. The trenches were abandoned, silent and lifeless under the burning noonday sun. The Germans had withdrawn in time.

From the top of the hill we looked across a smooth, sloping, grassy plain to a small wood, and here we found Fritz waiting for us. Slowly, in open order, we advanced against the wood, but already at such long range, the wood spurted fire from dozens of machine-guns. The plain was entirely without cover, a frontal charge was not to be thought of. The advance came to a standstill; each man crawled forward as far as possible and then lay flatly pressed against the ground, trying to hide behind tufts of grass waiting for our supports. At last our tanks came up, light, quick whippet-tanks this time, like brave little cutters cruising against a stiff breeze. They worked their way forward, zigzagging through the grass, filling the wood with lead. The German positions were not fortified to stand against such assailants; brave as they were (all through the War the German machine-gunners have gained a reputation for unsurpassed valour and devotion to duty), the Germans could offer but slight resistance against this attack. . . . Their fire ceased, the survivors fled.

The battalion got no more work to do yesterday. Well, we had done a good day's work—with the

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exception of Don Company which had neither accomplished nor suffered anything. We must have advanced five or six miles and taken no small number of prisoners and guns.

Now we could take it easy there on the plain all the afternoon; sleeping in the grass, cooking our dinner and hunting through the German trenches for souvenirs. I searched in vain in dozens of trenches and dug-outs, trying to find a German pistol and prismatic field-glasses, but one has to be extraordinarily smart to get hold of any stuff of that kind. The Canadians are masters in the art of looting! "The French fight for Freedom, the English for Colonies, and the Canadians for Souvenirs" the saying goes; and of the German prisoner we sing in joyous anticipation:

"I should get such wonderful things from you;
Iron-cross, watch, dagger, and helmet too!"

But the only thing of interest, besides some German letters and diaries that I got hold of, was a big, black loaf of rye-bread—rather clammy and sour, but delicious all the same after fifteen months of nothing but wheat bread. I toasted it over a little fire, slice after slice—the others looking on in disgust. We also found several tins of meat, probably horse-flesh, but not bad at all; yet the Germans are evidently hard up for food, poor fellows. In one dug-out, Chriss found a parcel—just arrived from home—very neatly done up; but when we eagerly opened it the contents proved to be only ten or twelve raw potatoes!

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Last night we camped in the little shell-torn wood we had taken, and got a fine long sleep. Of course, we had to keep gas-guard. I was awakened by Sam in the middle of the night and sat, half-asleep, on a fallen trunk of a tree until my hour was over, after which I went to rouse the next man—the first one I tried to shake awake, crawling about there in the pitchy darkness, was a dead German with a crushed head.

To-day is my twenty-sixth birthday. We have again been lying on the plain outside the wood all day, ready to march off. Twice my writing has been interrupted, and we have had to fall in; but each time the order was premature and we were quickly dismissed again.

It will soon be supper-time now; and then after dark they will surely march us off again. . . .

In the Trenches between Fouquescourt and Parvillers,
August 18th.

For the moment everything is fairly quiet. I have a chance to write a bit, sitting here in a little niche in the burning hot trench. We have had a good deal of work to do lately. . . .

After sunset on the evening of the 9th, we again marched eastwards from the Mézières wood along the Amiens-Roye road. A couple of German 'planes flew over us several times; I do not think that they could see anything of us in the dark night; but they knew that in all probability the

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roads would be crowded with troops, and so now and again they dropped a bomb—every time, fortunately, just to the right or the left of the long marching column, so they didn't get any of us.

At about 2 a.m., we came to a halt on the flat open field outside Folies, and were instructed to dig holes for cover. But the soil had not been tilled for three years and was as hard as stone; besides, nothing much can be done under any circumstances with our silly little entrenching tools. We grubbed and sweated for an hour—by then our hands were full of blisters and we had each made a little mole-hill, behind which we slept peacefully and undisturbed. When our officers came round in the morning, however, they found our results decidedly unsatisfactory, so we moved forward another half-mile where we found an old German trench which offered better cover.

But all through the day, shells would come whizzing now and again, disturbing and annoying us, and Chriss and I decided to look for a better hole. We found a deep, square hole which the Germans had used for storing ammunition, cleaned it out and covered the floor with a lot of old sandbags. Then we brought rafters and corrugated-iron from the ruined village, shovelled a thick layer of gravel on the top of it, and invited the section to tea in our palace in the evening.

During that night the German aeroplanes arrived in force and bombed the village to hell, but Chriss and I and a couple of the other boys lay safe, three yards underground, secure against everything

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except just a genuine "bull's-eye," pitying the poor fellows up above in the shallow trenches. However, none of them was hit either; we were all of us out in the fields and the Germans bombed only the village; but a number of horses had just arrived and were stabled here, and they were slaughtered by the dozen. Horses, by the way, seem to play a very minor part in warfare nowadays; we hardly ever see one or any other animal near the front, fortunately. I had dreaded more than anything else seeing half-dead and shell-torn horses left behind along the roads. It may be silly to feel more compassion for suffering beasts than for human beings, for surely animals have a much less acute sense of feeling than men?—and they don't suffer mentally at all, but somehow I can't help my feelings.

At 8 p.m. on the 11th, we marched off once more, along small muddy lanes this time. We kept tramping backwards and forwards through the darkness for five or six hours but we didn't get far, perhaps altogether three miles further east. Of course, it is by no means an easy matter to find your way across a labyrinth of old trenches, overgrown ruins and new roads; but then, our kind and brave officers are no more capable of using a map than the average cow, and are far less able to find their way about at night. Time after time the column came to a halt, the officers forming an eager, excited group and studying the map by the light of a pocket-lamp. We heard them discussing matters in low, irritated voices, disagreeing about

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the road, the direction and the four cardinal points. Soon came a muffled, exasperated: "About turn!" and we marched back the same way as we had just come.

I had a nasty belly-ache. All of us have rotten stomachs—probably because we guzzle gallons of water from all kinds of wells and pools during these hot days. I soon found out that these wayside conferences just gave me time enough to disappear down into the ditch beside the road—and up again in no time. The kilt does come in handy sometimes!

We were afraid that night—or I was, at any rate. We knew that our turn had come, for Don Company had been spared so far; but now the offensive had come to a standstill, and the Germans who had recovered from the first blow had fortified their positions very strongly and were putting up a desperate resistance, fighting furiously for every yard of ground. It would be our job to make a breach in their lines. . . .

The whole front line was alive that night; the angry roar growing louder as we advanced eastwards. The horizon was a belt of white, red, and blue flames—and we marched straight into the furnace.

As we marched through the village of Rouvroy, a shell suddenly came whizzing close above our heads, others following. In all a dozen shots from a long-range gun. The Germans must have had a spy with a telephone hidden somewhere in the cellars, or else they had devised other plans to

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ascertain when our troops were passing, since they managed to shell the village whenever a battalion was marching through. We heard the report of the gun somewhere far off—and held our breath whilst the shells, hissing like evil spirits—a whole series of sounds pressed into one ominous second—came straight for us! But they only struck a wall to the left, shattering bricks, fragments and dust all over us; or buried themselves in the ditch to the right of the road. We got through without anyone being hit.

Coming out of the village, we passed a wounded soldier lying on the roadside, while his wounds were being dressed in the dark. Long before we came near and long after we had passed him we heard his raucous, frantic yell, in hopeless despair: "Arrr——leave me alone, God damn you! . . . Arrr ——leave me alone, God damn you.!! . . ."

The sky was reddening slightly in the east—(only yesterday morning!)—when we came to our destination—or rather our starting-place for the coming operations. An old, low trench, filled with rolls of wire and heaps of refuse; a nasty, pointed wire post had been left somewhere in the middle of the trench and tore a gash in every bare knee passing.

We had hardly sat down and eased our straps a bit, when Captain Grafftey came along to take some of us out with him on patrol. It was still rather dark, and we fumbled about amidst rolls of wire and into ditches for half an hour without noting anything of interest; then Captain Grafftey sent

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the patrol back, he himself going on to Fouquescourt—a large village, which had been stormed on the 10th by one of our battalions—to obtain information. I asked permission to go along with him and it was readily given.

Whilst walking along, Captain Grafftey explained to me the progress of our operations up to the present moment. He has been extremely kind and friendly to me from the very first; like myself, he was a civil engineer and had just taken his degree before he enlisted.

We had just time to pass across the open fields in front of the village and reach our goal, before daylight enabled the enemy to see us. Fouquescourt was crowded with soldiers of the 10th Brigade, impatiently waiting for relief. At the first house we passed they gave us a most welcome glass of beer, and sent for one of their officers, a major, who explained the position to Captain Grafftey—and me.

He said that we had now reached the old front-line of 1915-16, before the German retreat in March 1917, and that the 42nd stood just in the old French trenches with No Man's Land ahead of them. Fritz had fortified himself in his old quarters, with every post along the line provided with new machine-guns. Our offensive had met with a check here. Fouquescourt had been taken, making a breach in the German wall of defence; but further south the attack against Parvillers had failed, some Imperial division had been repulsed there with terrible losses. It would now be our task to take Parvillers.

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We could have no artillery to assist us—and a couple of tanks, which had been at work the day before, had been knocked out and left stranded in the middle of the plain.

The troops at Fouquescourt held the village itself but nothing of its surroundings. Like most villages in this part of the country, Fouquescourt consisted of a cluster of farmhouses, gardens and big trees, enclosed by thick hedges. Captain Grafftey, the Major and I walked round the place to take a look at Parvillers and la Chavatte, two or three miles away. A big open and perfectly flat plain lay between us and Parvillers, the dew on the long, grey grass glittering in the morning sun. The whole place looked peaceful and deserted; no trace of the enemy could be seen, and of course the grass covered all scars of war. But we knew that the quiet plain was traversed all over with German trenches and packed with soldiers and machine guns.

A frontal attack across No Man's Land was out of the question—but it was just possible that the position might be carried by attacking the flank: entering the trenches here at Fouquescourt, working our way along, clearing out the trench, corner by corner. . . .

Fouquescourt was a slaughter-house!

The wounded from the victorious storm had been carried away to safety, but dead bodies were still lying everywhere, along the streets and in the gardens. Germans chiefly, and how young they

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were—mere boys many of them! The blue-bottles were already buzzing around them; the face of one of the dead men was quite black and at first I took him to be a negro. What sort of a death did he die?

On our way back to the battalion, we had to crawl along the bottom of the ditches so as not to be seen. The sun was playing on our nicely polished brass buttons and clasps, and of course we didn't want to be put out of the game just before the start!

The others had got a bit of breakfast when we came back, and the trench-bottom was packed with sleeping, huddled-up soldiers; but I was awfully hungry and prowled around till I got hold of some bread and a bit of bacon. Then I, too, slept for an hour or so.

At 10 a.m. we were off again, creeping man by man along the ditch for half-a-mile till we reached Fouquescourt and got under cover there. We relieved the battalion holding the village and prepared for the attack.

Captain Grafftey rallied us in a wide, deep communication-trench in the centre of the village and gave each man his special orders. We were to advance in single file, half-a-dozen steps between the two of us; the first two men with rifle and bayonet, then Witley and Halley each with a big bag full of Mills' bombs. Lieutenant Scott was to be No. 5—and after him the whole platoon. Man by man, we were told where to stand and what to do. As the men in front were hit, the others from behind were to advance and take their places. Lieutenant

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Scott was to be in charge; if he were killed, there would be the sergeants and corporals to take command, each in his turn; and if they all were killed or wounded, one of us privates would be called upon to take the lead, first McLean and then I. At last, when everything had been arranged with minute care, Captain Grafftey turned to me: "Now, Dinesen, I want you to go first in the line and Mac next to you."

The foul-smelling trench grew hot as a brick-kiln at noon—there was not a breath of wind, and the sun flamed down from the dark blue sky. We slipped off all our equipment and left it in the trench, while we prowled round the deserted farmhouses in search of water. Fouquescourt, which for years has formed part of the German front line, has withstood the shelling and the fighting wonderfully well. The houses of course have been shattered, but there are still remnants of gardens left round most of them, besides many beautiful shady trees. How very different from the state of things in the villages round Lens! There were wells too; many of them quite undamaged, but the water was thick and putrefied. We sampled them all and at last found one less smelly than the rest, so we filled our stomachs and bottles there.

But in the trenches out in the open plain, it would surely be much worse than here, as hot as hell. I pulled off my shirt and stuffed it into my haversack. It would have been more comfortable to take off the tunic—only I had to carry two or three bombs in each of my outer pockets.

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About 8 p.m. we had some bread and bully-beef brought up to us, and then we lined up in the ditch as arranged, fifty men or thereabouts.

It was not to be expected that we at the head should escape with our lives. . . . I sent a wistful glance all round me, just as we boys at home did on the last evening of the summer holidays. . . . Everything was going so well, and the world was so warm and beautiful—and I should have to leave it all. But never mind, first we would have a fight—a real fight—man to man in the narrow trench, with bomb, rifle and bayonet, just as I have always dreamt a real fight to be—ever since I can remember!

At the stroke of 8.30 p.m. the signal sounded: "Now boys, come along . . ." and we left the shade of the tall hedge and walked quietly along the dry trench, out on the open plain.

The trenches were old and half-sunk in many places; perhaps they had been mostly used by the Germans as communication-ditches between listening posts and machine-gun positions. I had to crouch so as not to be seen above the parapet. Every ten or fifteen yards the trench made a sharp turn and changed direction, whilst there were branches jutting out both to right and left. It was impossible to know which way to take—and very soon I lost my way altogether in the maze.

But of the enemy we didn't see a sign during the first few minutes.

When we had advanced some hundred yards, we came to a sudden stop. The trench had been

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filled in and a road cut across—either by the Allied forces in 1917 or by the Germans this last summer. "Wait a minute, Mac!" I raised my head cautiously, inch by inch, to spy across the road. (It reminded me of watching for curlews through a tuft of lyme-grass on the downs.) Everything looked quiet and peaceful; then I jumped up on to the road and down again into the trench on the other side, followed by Mac and the rest. The trench made a turn and crossed the road once more; I jumped quickly on to the road this time—and caught a glimpse of the trench on the other side, completely blocked with big bundles of barbed-wire. Behind the wire I could see a number of helmets and grey uniforms—and at the same instant the machine-guns from both sides rattled away close upon me—the bullets kicking up clouds of dust at my feet. Without being hit, I tumbled back into our trench. . . . "What do you want us to do now, Sir?" "Well, we *must* take that post!" "Come on, then!"—but just when we were getting ready for a desperate charge, someone shouted out from behind that we had taken the wrong turning and would have to get back, and sure enough there, in front of us, were the tree tops of la Chavatte.

Six of us had got across the first road, and the two last jumped back at once—but the machine guns blazed again from both sides, and the last man, Halley, collapsed on the road, his body riddled by bullets. Somehow they managed to get hold of him from the other side and drag him down, but to us four it seemed hopeless to try and

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follow him, for we now realised that Fritz had caught us in a trap between the two crossings.

The Germans behind the road and wire couldn't see anything of us, but they now started throwing "sticks" at us—dozens of their beastly bombs came hurtling through the air, making us jump about for cover pretty quickly. It was clear that the damned Fritzies over there meant to exterminate us thoroughly and methodically! Witley and I crept on our hands and knees along the trench close up to the road and cooled their ardour with a couple of bombs right in their faces. Standing side by side, we pulled the pins out of another two bombs and peered over to take aim—when Witley suddenly collapsed without a sound, a little bullet-hole in his forehead, just below the rim of his helmet, and the back of his head torn away. One of our bravest men gone in an instant . . . one of my best friends!

I crouched still lower, looking up at the sun. . . . Was it possible for us to hold out until after sunset and then crawl back under cover of darkness? But the whole of our platoon was waiting for us; they yelled to us to come back and not delay the war! Lieutenant Scott had to risk the daring attempt; lying flat on his belly and raking away the gravel and stones with his hands, he gradually worked his way across the road—making himself as flat as ever he could. Mac and I held our breath as we stared fascinated by the sight. . . . Gosh, he did it; he actually got over without being seen or shot at! . . . We then threw off the whole of our equipment and Mac crawled over while I gave

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Fritz another bomb to divert his attention. A last farewell to Witley in his pool of blood—then I too wriggled across the road and waved a parting farewell to Fritz with both my feet in the air before I slid down to our own part of the trench among my friends, immensely relieved.

Proceedings had stopped while we sat there in the trap, and we found the platoon impatiently awaiting our return. After our sad experience, none of the others was eager to go first in the line; but Mac and I had got our backs up now and we were more than willing to try again and pay Fritz back for what we owed him for Witley and Halley. I took Halley's equipment instead of my own, which I had left behind. . . . We filled our pockets with a fresh supply of bombs, and found the right turning in the trench a little further back.

A moment only—and we were right up against the enemy. . . .

I turn a corner quickly—two grey Germans stand straight in front of me. . . . Two red flashes straight into my face—done for already!—but they haven't hit me, so now it is my turn. A snap-shot at one of the two, and the other disappears round a corner. The road is free! "Come on boys, give them hell!" At the next corner a shower of rifle-bullets and "sticks" whizz past my head from a machine-gun post. . . . I fire away madly till my magazine is empty; then I fling down the rifle and hurl my bombs at them—the trench is chockfull of dust and smoke. Mac has come up close behind me, his shots thunder right into my ears. . . . From

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behind they are throwing bombs by the dozen, without minding in the least who and what they are hitting. They shout and yell: "Give them hell, boys!" The German dynamite-bombs are bursting everywhere around Mac and I; in the trench and on the parapet. We throw ourselves flat at the bottom of the trench and are not even hit by an explosion three yards away, though a cartload of rubbish descends on our backs. Jack comes up from behind with a fresh supply of Mills' bombs. . . . "Here you are, Fritzie boy, damn you! . . . and here is another!" Ah, they have had enough, they are done for, the bastards! A couple of survivors dash off from the post, and we rush after them, tear our hands and kilts on the wire, jumping across the overturned machine-gun and the dead or dying gunners, running panting and perspiring along the dry, hard trench, corner by corner . . . and then we reach the next machine-gun post and throw ourselves against it, yelling and roaring, with bombs and bayonets, battle-mad—regardless of everything in the world, our whole being intent on one thing alone: to force our way ahead and kill! . . .

Throughout the whole afternoon of yesterday we fought there in the trenches. We managed to drive the Germans back as far as the outskirts of Parvillers—our last shots following them as they jumped out of their trenches and ran to shelter behind the village hedges. But here they must have had reinforcements sent up, for they launched a furious counter-attack, and we had to fall back before their numbers. Corner by corner, contesting

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every inch of ground, we lost the trenches again; lost nearly all of what we had gained during the day. And then forward once more! . . . When darkness at length fell it found us in the middle of the big plain, near the Rouvroy-Parvillers road . . . still far from our goal.

The mile of trench network that we had taken from them had been bought dearly. Lieutenant Scott had been brought back seriously wounded by a hand-grenade, and another officer coming up to take his place had also "gone west" shortly after. Many of our bravest comrades had been killed, and everyone had done his utmost, regardless of danger; willing to give his life for his cause and his friends. Two of them had taken their machine-gun out in the open, when the Germans counter-attacked, and had for a long time managed to check the onslaught until they at last got their bullets.

Incredible as it seems, Mac and I got off without being hit. Last night, when leaning against the trench-wall to rest a bit, I felt my shoulders smart—a fragment of shell having ripped my tunic right across my back just scratching the skin. But Mac had to take command during the night, all our N.C.O.'s had either been killed or wounded.

The Germans had lost more than we, though: Jack maintained that he had counted thirty-two dead! Some of them I must have killed, but I don't know how many. You live so intensely in the moment of the fight that you can hardly recollect any of the details afterwards.

All the same, one single episode: It was already

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A HEAVY SHELL

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AFTER THE BATTLE

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getting dark, when suddenly we came to one of those places where the trench stopped, a road having been cut across it. There was, apparently, a whole network of roads crossing these trenches. . . . We didn't like the idea of crossing another road, so we stood waiting there in the dusk, nine or ten of us, when the new Major, who didn't belong to our battalion at all, arrived to take command. He came running up to us, very energetic and conceited: "Come on, come on, boys—show them your kilts!" Jack and one more jumped up on the road—but the next second they tumbled down again: "There are crowds of them over there!" We waited a minute or two—then we heard another section of our company yell, shout and fire for all they were worth in a trench—a little further west—running somewhat parallel with ours. And then we had to try again. Three of us jumped across, but just at the moment we slid down into the trench on the other side of the road, a shower of "sticks" came through the air towards us—the Germans were wide-awake right enough. We jumped and tumbled backwards, while the bombs thundered behind us on the very spot where we had just stood. Fortunately, the Germans seem to love their fairly harmless "sticks" and throw them whenever they have a chance, instead of using the much more deadly rifle.

Such a traverse is, of course, extremely difficult to take as long as there are two or three good riflemen stationed at a corner immediately behind. But to make matters worse, they had now brought

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up a machine-gun and were sweeping the road from the side as well. The Germans kept fairly quiet for some minutes, and then the Major came hurrying up to us again: "What the hell is the matter with you?" I happened to be standing at the head of the file and had no choice—I jumped across once more: with two mighty leaps I landed safely in the trench on the other side, though machine-gun bullets sang and whistled around me. Not one German to be seen! I went on to the first turning —and the next—with my bayonet ready, and the other boys close at my heels. All of a sudden a dark figure turned up in the dusk immediately in front of me, my rifle flew into position. . . . "Who goes there?" . . . "Forty-second!" . . . "Same here!" . . . "That you, Chriss?" . . . "Hell, is that you, Tom?"

The Germans had evidently been wedged in between our two platoons and had at last lost heart and were driven to earth. Chriss and his party took them all prisoners: more than thirty of them there were, he said.

The fighting did not come to an end till it was pitch-dark—and not until then could we look for something to eat. In Halley's haversack I had found a tin of bully-beef, but one of the bullets which did for him had gone straight through the tin, so we didn't touch it. I also found a good razor in his bag, to make up for my own lost shaving kit; but I most regret having lost all my letters and souvenirs.

The cool of the evening was wonderfully refresh-

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ing after the intense heat of the day; but after midnight it got pretty cold. All night long we have been lying on the trench-slopes near the place where we crossed the road, ready to meet a counter-attack. All night long the machine-gun bullets have whistled across our heads, and some small trench-mortars and one big *minenwerfer* have dropped bombs, without doing much damage, however. But Fritz was probably just as tired as we were, and the attack didn't come off. . . .

I was miserably cold and shivering all over, for I had lost my shirt, and my tunic was wet through with the day's perspiration. All the same, the cold helped me to keep awake. At the first sign of dawn some kind soul came creeping up to us with a big tank on his back full of steaming hot tea. . . . There is nothing like tea after a long cold night in an outpost! As long as we have any work to do, we don't get any rum. . . .

Things have been fairly quiet now during the morning, and I have had time to hunt for a new shirt. I could get as many as I liked from the dead Germans—but after I had had a look at a couple of them, I gave up the idea. Then Chriss gave me a candle and I went down into the German dug-outs to try my luck there. They are admirably made, these dug-outs, deep and safe, with many separate little rooms, and with lots of berths and tables. But they were filthy beyond words, and the stench was unbearable. . . . I found plenty of shirts, but they were all of them alive with lice—far worse than ours. Fritz is very short of soap, I

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guess. At last I succeeded in finding a parcel evidently just arrived from home, and containing among other things a new and clean shirt. . . .

August 15th.

Have they forgotten us—forgotten to send reinforcements? Are they short of reserves after the enormous losses during the last few days? Or is it that the Germans are shelling our communication lines too violently? I know nothing, but this is our fourth day in the captured trench. There are still about twenty men left from our platoon, and we are still able to hold on, but are not strong enough to advance further—much less to take Parvillers.

Yesterday we tried to push forward again. A new captain, Allen by name, was sent up to organize us for an attack through the trench, just like the other day. I felt rather inclined to shirk the whole job at first, but when he began lining us up, I realized that I might as well jump at it and have it over, so I asked for permission to go first in the line.

The attack failed, though. Fritz had barricaded himself so strongly that we couldn't force our way through. Captain Allen got a bullet through his neck, and not a few of our men were killed or wounded. At last we gave it up and barricaded ourselves in the trench as far forward as we had been able to advance.

On the first day I had taken a big German

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automatic pistol. . . . Just before turning a corner of the trench, I happened to raise myself and take a look over the parapet. At the same time a German round the corner also put his head up and peeped at me! For a second we stared at each other—a round, bearded, frightened face—then I fired, stooped again and ran round the corner. A machine gun, five steps away, was pointing straight at me, but the sergeant behind it was lying on his back with my bullet through helmet and brain, and with a pistol by his side. I grabbed it quickly—it was just what I had been looking for—and ran forward again. Yesterday I tried it, but found that I couldn't hit anything; my rifle is much more reliable.

While the other boys toiled and sweated, filling sandbags, and heaping them on top of each other to make a wall across the trench—which is rather deep and wide just at this spot—I was lying flat at the trench bottom a little ahead, with my rifle covering the nearest corner, some ten yards further along. About a hundred yards in front of me in the direction of the trench were the remains of a big tree, the top of which had been shot away. The lower branches, however, still formed a thick knot round the trunk. Suddenly something moved behind the dense foliage—a German soldier, surely, who had climbed the tree, and who was now carefully taking aim at me! But I couldn't make him out clearly, and I didn't want to fire and scare the other chaps by raising a false alarm. I therefore remained where I was and didn't wag a hair—every

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moment expecting to get a bullet through my brain. Five minutes later a sergeant came crawling up to where I lay. He handed me his field-glasses and I found that what I had taken to be a German sniper was nothing but a dead branch swinging in the breeze!

They have sent us plenty of bread and bully-beef now; besides, we can always get hold of some more grub in the German dug-outs. Chriss has just bagged a tin of pork and beans and is busy heating it over a tommy-cooker. We are worse off for water: they did bring us two big tins, but the intense heat of the trenches makes us frightfully thirsty and we finished the whole supply in no time. Besides, the tins had been used for paraffin, and the water had a penetrating flavour of old lamps! Our insides are still very troublesome. Last night I got such a violent attack of cramp in my stomach that it was impossible for me to stand upright, so I was given permission to go back a little and lie down in the bottom of the trench. But time after time I was trampled upon by a passing comrade, who took it for granted that I was dead. . . . Shortly after the Germans started to send us a number of gas-bombs, and then it grew too uncanny lying alone in the dark ditch, so I crawled back and joined the others. It is very difficult to tell when the gas becomes sufficiently dangerous to warrant putting on your mask, also when you may safely take it off again.

It is decidedly inadvisable to show your head above the parapet in the daytime, the machine-

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gun bullets whizz ominously the whole time over the top. Now and again they smack against the sandbags and send the loose sand up in the air in little fans. But we have tied a small piece of mirror slantwise at the end of a stick and use it as a periscope to watch the grey plain between us and the invisible enemy.

Here we are in a fairly deep and safe trench. The rifle bullets can't get at us, and when the shells are coming too near, we can always take shelter in an old German dug-out. Anyhow, it is a distinct improvement on the shallow ditch where we stood the first day; besides, Fritz had some very annoying trench-mortars there, and all through the day their little bombs came swinging and swaying in a big curve towards us—striking hard enough where they fell, and twice we had to crouch at the bottom of the ditch, raging and swearing, whilst the shells from our own guns hurled stones, gravel, and bits of iron down over us.

Infinitely high up above our heads, almost invisible in the dark blue sky, 'planes are circling about, coming and going, rising and descending. The days are so calm that we can hear their whirring motors long before we can catch sight of them. They are chiefly English machines, but a moment ago some Germans came out of the sky against them. We watched the combat, saw them circling round one another, swooping and ascending, bowing and curtseying as in an elegant old-fashioned dance—the sun glittering on their wings and propellers. One of the duellists was hit—we

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couldn't see which nationality—a small, yellowish flame blazed up from the tail of the wounded 'plane, and it rushed downwards at a terrific rate. But the flames grew rapidly—a black column of smoke trailing in the air behind it. Suddenly the fire leaped forward to the body and wings, and the whole machine became one big ball of flames. The wreck fell straight down the last thousand yards.

In the daytime there is plenty for us to do, but the nights are long. . . .

We are beginning to get a bit tired now: if we sit down during the night, we fall asleep instantly, and that won't do. . . . There are so few of us now that every man is needed for the look-out at night; but for four days we have had no sleep.

During most of the nights we stand on a step in the trench wall: Chriss, Jack and I together—our heads just above the parapet, peering across the grey waste of No Man's Land, watching the signal-rockets and the exploding shells, and bobbing down whenever the volleys from the machine-guns become too offensive.

There is a moon these nights: a low, red moon over Parvillers. Last night I told Chriss a little about the moon and stars, while we stood shivering at the listening post, changing our weight from the one foot to the other. The stars are the same old friends wherever you are. I pointed them out to him, one by one: the Lyre, the Swan and the Eagle—Cassiopeia, Andromeda—all the old constellations. During such dark, clear nights of August I used, as a boy, to sit at the window in

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my own dear home and watch them—learning to know them, one by one, as they appeared over the Sound.

When Orion rises in the east, the night is nearly over. . . .

We may have many more of these beautiful nights out here before we are relieved. We are young, strong men, and we'll hold out for many more days. . . .

I have always wished that I might once be tried to my very utmost. When it comes to the crucial test, when each nerve and fibre in our bodies for days and weeks has been strained to bursting-point—what are we worth then? what strength have we got in us? And when we have given everything we had to give—when sleeplessness, starvation and wounds have worn us out, body and soul, can we then still . . . hold on when there is nothing in you . . . except the Will which says to you: "Hold on!"?

Can we stand, like Skarphedin of the Sagas, jammed in, unable to move, with our legs burnt away as high as our knees—and "chant a lay"?

It is high noon now, frizzling hot, all firing seems to have been suspended for the time being.

Here at the mouth of the dug-out where I am sitting there is just a suspicion of shade to be had. The heat in the trenches is tropical; I am frightfully thirsty, too. A little to the right of me is Mac, sleeping soundly in a narrow niche that he has dug into the trench wall—his helmet stuck into the

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clayish wall to shade his face. He is worn out—much more than the rest of us—from his new and unaccustomed responsibility. . . .

A few steps away on the left lies a dead Fritz: he lies stretched out straight and just looks as if he were sleeping . . . but his hands are grey, and the flies are buzzing about him. His head is twisted to one side in a strange way, and someone has thrown a piece of grey blanket over it. I think of the words of Finn the serf, telling of the ogre who foreboded the great snowstorm at Egge: "He looked like a small man wrapped in a grey cloak, but his head was nothing but a naked sheep's skull . . . and that was how the whole flock of sheep looked when we found their carcasses, after the spring sun had melted away the snow. . . ."

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NEW YEAR'S EVE

BRAMSHOTT CAMP,
December 31st, 1918.

The sky is brightening now to N.W. after the morning's rain, so we'll get a fine New Year's Eve after all. In another hour or two we shall be going out: McLean, Dobell, Burke and I—to dine at Hotel Moorland—where Garney and I had that row with the General last Christmas. . . .

We were here as recruits then, we shivered in our kilts throughout the winter, but I loved the life and the camp. I was happy here as never before. The future was ours then, the great world-adventure was waiting for us, *anything* might happen in those days—to the world as to ourselves. Every route march we had here made us more fit to march to Berlin; every shot we fired made us more worthy opponents for our proud, gallant enemies.

And now we are here again—some of us—as first lieutenants, in smart new uniforms and with a batman to skip for us. . . .

Our daily life in the camp has not changed apparently from last year. There are still the good old morning parades and the drill afterwards in the mud. All the young recruits are being trained as we used to be: yes, rather! they'll soon know all about saluting and presenting arms and waging war!

But now, of course, it is all silly nonsense. . . .

Last year's camp life was full-blooded reality—

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now it is a lifeless repetition, like a bad dream. We left Bramshott in March, going out to fight and die; now we are back again, as pantomime soldiers!

I have applied for discharge, and maybe they will let me off very soon. Day by day I yearn to hear that my application has been granted. Home to Denmark for a visit—and then, if possible, off to the open Masai steppes in Africa.

We won the war. . . .

Mars, God of War, who for four long years has been ravaging and devastating all Europe, has at last been conquered. There is great rejoicing all over the world; there is now a chance that Mars may be chained down, so that he will never break loose again. Oh, I know it well, it is quite true: a new World War would scorch civilization off the earth—let's all work for peace and prosperity now!

But surely such an old god may be able to appear in more shapes than one: ought we to be afraid to declare that openly? To me and to many other young men he has been a Prometheus giving us the new fire: he has opened the door to an unknown world—the only real world, beyond good or evil. "Until you have been through the War, you do not know what it means to live!" said a friend of mine, coming home in 1916 from the Foreign Legion, with a shattered knee.

When I was sent to the front from England last year, I did not expect to come back any more. Once and for all, I shook off the fear of death by looking Death straight in the face: "I know you

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will get me and I don't care!" Having done that you are set free—immediately. You have gained perfect freedom!—though you may not realize it until later.

I do not think that any man can meet with a more wonderful experience. At last you have broken the chain, the almost unbreakable instinct of self-preservation, which Nature has used for subjugating you—for making you a willing slave. You have nothing whatever to be afraid of any more; you are free to rise, laughing above all trifling worries about life and the future; you have gained the great liberation!

Perhaps very religious people may sometimes attain this "Salvation." They talk of "the Peace of God which passeth all understanding"; also to them it may seem ridiculous to be too concerned about the troubles of the day. . . . St. Francis speaks of Brother Poverty and Sister Death. . . .

And a great, happy love will bring you the same supreme freedom and comprehension—I know that, now.

But while you live in this other world, you do not feel and know these things very clearly—everything around you seems so obvious and simple. It is not until you see the gates shut behind you that you understand it all: You have been in the Enchanted Wood. . . .

Of course, I was fortunate past all belief the whole time. Jack got a bullet through his head; Sam and Mac were badly wounded. I got off without a scratch, with all my aspirations and

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dreams fulfilled. And they rewarded me, into the bargain!

At the Officers' School at Bexhill our Colonel handed me the French Croix de Guerre; and the other day at Buckingham Palace King George gave me the V.C. There were three others receiving it at the same time, and one Cross was to be given to a sergeant who had been killed, so his parents had come to get it in his place—two old, frail people. The King said a few gracious words to each of us as he pinned the Cross on our breasts. We saluted and stepped back. . . .

That afternoon I went for a long tramp through the rain, across Hampstead Heath, and came home in the evening, deadly tired, sick of the whole world. . . .

And now we return to civilisation; we take up our former life anew, with all its well-known rules and regulations. All the little worries will come back; we shall again have to put on the old blinkers; once more the weary load of a future will fall upon our shoulders. We shall be expected to take an interest in the "Things that matter"—the politics of the day, the dividend of our investments, the colour of our tie. . . .

Behind us—lost beyond recall—lies our Enchanted Wood . . . the *real* world, the *real* life.

THE END

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